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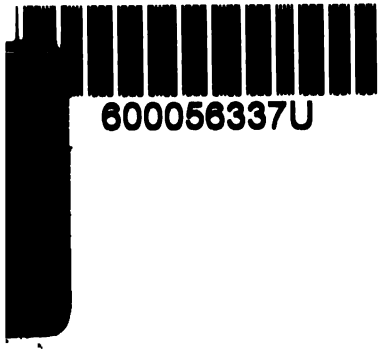
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HARDING
THE
MONEY-SPINNER


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HARDING THE MONEY-SPINNER.

HARDING THE MONEY-SPINNER.

BY

MILES GERALD KEON,

AUTHOR OF "DION AND THE SIBYLS."

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. I.





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PREFACE.

THE late Miles Gerald Keon was descended from an ancient Irish family. He was born in 1821, in Tipperary, near the Shannon, in a castle belonging to his father; the marble used in the construction of which, being taken from quarries in the neighbourhood, was said to have "finished both the building and the builder," so that the castle is to this day called "Keon's Folly." His father died when the boy was three years old, his mother only surviving his father one twelvemonth. Thus at the tender age of four years he was left an orphan, with one little sister, younger

than himself, to cheer him in facing the world.

After the death of their mother, the little orphans were taken from home to Temora, the residence of their grandmother, the Countess Magawly. Here the two children were both lovingly cared for and protected by that most excellent lady, until she herself died, leaving them to the care of her only son, the Count Magawly,* at that time Prime Minister to Napoleon's widow, Marie Louise, who had come from Parma to attend the funeral of his revered mother. The Count very soon discovered in his little nephew marvellous intelligence, and an unusual appreciation, for so young a child, of all he then told him about the history of different places and countries. He spoke to him as one "qui a la puissance d'entendre, et de comprendre;" and he was determined

* See Burke's Peerage, under the head of "Magawly" among "Foreign Noblemen."

that, whatever happened, the boy should have a first-class education. Accordingly he made up his mind at once to send him to the famous College of Stonyhurst, where, during a period of eight or nine years, Miles Keon's youthful and vigorous intellect had full scope to develop itself, under the guidance and cultivation of those far-famed imparters of learning, the Jesuit Fathers.

During his education at the College he gained several high honours, and formed one or two lasting friendships.

About four years after leaving the College he came from Keonbrook to London, to study for the Bar; but after having "eaten his term" at Gray's Inn, he acquired a distaste for the profession, and being persuaded by his friend Sidney Smythe (the late Lord Strangford) to devote himself to literature, he soon became a well-known man of letters, and one of the leaders of the Young England Conservative party. He was only twenty-

three years of age when he began his literary career in London, with all its toils and disappointments, its occasional triumphs, and its long waitings. He was alone in the great Babylon, fighting up-hill against considerable odds—for he was an Irishman and a Catholic. Our great English author, the late Lord Lytton—always generous in encouraging literary talent—became happily his friend. On discovering who was the writer of certain leading articles in the *Morning Post*, Lord Lytton wrote to him, expressing his admiration, and at the same time inviting him to stay with him at his country seat at Knebworth, to meet some literary and scientific celebrities. Thus commenced the intimacy and friendship of the two men—the one, the great, acknowledged, and everywhere famous English novelist, poet, dramatist and orator; and the other, the then unknown, young aspirant to fame, but who was afterwards acknow-

ledged not only in England, but in France, Italy, India, America, and other countries where he sojourned, as a distinguished writer, poet, and orator. In 1856 Mr. Keon was honoured by being made a member of the Literary and Scientific Institution of Abbeville (*Société Imperiale d'Emulation*) by the late president of that society, Monsieur J. Boucher de Perthes, a well-known French author and geologist.

The author of "Harding the Money-spinner" might very possibly have never attempted to write a novel—for at the time when he did so he was engaged in literary studies of a much higher and more important description—had it not been for a circumstance which it may be as well briefly here to mention, seeing that it paved the way for the young author and journalist to a practically useful introduction.

One foggy morning in November, as he was conversing with Lord Lytton in the

study of his house in Park Lane, a gentleman was ushered into their presence, his card having been first sent in. This gentleman was Mr. Stiff, the late proprietor of the *London Journal;* who was calling for the purpose of petitioning Lord Lytton to write a novel for his journal, on the celebrated novelist's own terms. This request was at once politely declined. But after some little talk on general subjects with this gentleman, Lord Lytton, upon the spur of the moment, and waving his hand towards Mr. Keon, while he addressed himself to Mr. Stiff, said kindly, "Let me introduce my friend here; he is just the man who will do in my stead, and he perhaps will accept your proposal, provided you can make terms amicably between you." Mr. Stiff gladly availed himself of the great author's recommendation, and immediately fixed a day to talk the matter over at his office. There liberal terms were proposed and accepted for the under-

taking of the following novel. It is now for the first time published in book form.

Mr. Keon was perhaps better known, however, as the author of "Dion and the Sibyls," a classical novel of the time of Tiberius, singularly accurate in its details and local colouring, and revealing abilities of a very high order. Mr. Keon died at Bermuda, in 1875, deeply regretted by all who knew him.



HARDING THE MONEY-SPINNER.

CHAPTER I.

"Hear now further:
After the feast, when now the vap'ring wine
Opens the heart and shuts the eyes."
SCHILLER'S *Piccolomini.*

IT was a beautiful summer evening in an English June, ere the glare and sultriness of the day had yet sensibly abated, when two youths of good quality—some eighteen, apparently, or nineteen years of age—descended from a postchaise at the door of the Frederick and Pigtail, the principal inn of Huntingferry, one of the prettiest towns in Warwickshire, or, indeed, in all England.

The horses had evidently made a long stage. The road by which the travellers had entered the town was *not*—out of five which traversed it in different directions—the one leading from the races, some twelve miles distant; a scene to which railway, saddle horse, and carriage of all public or private kinds and styles, had conveyed thousands from every part of the country since early morning, and whence no straggler had hitherto returned to this neighbourhood. A stillness unusual even in that tranquil place made the clang of the chaise door a startling sound, as the travellers, having quitted it, looked round them, and stood for a moment under the fretwork shade of the two trees which supported the inn porch on either hand. Athirst, ran on before it the dusty road, which would not accept a change of dress, nor take, even for a moment, the customary costume of paving stones, which such roads wear as they pass, in deference

to large towns; parched, yet eager and unbeguiled, it rushed forward between the low brick parapets of the bow-like bridge, and climbed, under the blazing light, the long-backed hill beyond.

Little thought they how that road would make their hearts beat, ere many hours had passed!

This road was pleasanter to gaze on than to travel on, and grateful now felt the cool inn-porch, beneath the bloomy luxuriance of the ringleted eglantine! pleasant even the shady old-fashioned archway by its side; and the slow, lazy, irregular echo of the jolting chaise, which—its purpose fulfilled, its freight discharged—was rumbling with a hollow sound into the yard behind. But pleasanter than all, the voice of the innkeeper, as he came out to welcome his new guests.

He appeared in his shirt sleeves, and a sudden alacrity which shone in his face

seemed to exhale itself upon everything around him. The "chame maid's" bell, as it vociferously jangled within, was almost articulate, and the very bill which he waved in his left hand was alive with greetings.

"Why, it's Mr. Geoffrey Mandeville, as I'm a living sinner! Well, I'm sure, sir, you be main welcome! Left Eton, Mr. Geoffrey, for good? I heard they was expecting of you at the Park. Well, but how you be shot up, sir! You'll have your father, Sir Walter Mandeville's inches, every one on 'em. This way, Mr. Geoffrey—this way, gentlemen, if you please. You would like to wash your hands before dining?"

"Thank you, Parker, thank you; but I don't think we can stay to dine. We want you to give us horses on. As to the horses that brought us here, besides that they are pretty well exhausted, we could not procure them except on condition that we took them no further than Huntingferry, and

that they returned to Basingcote this evening, to be ready for something early to-morrow. In fact, they were already ordered, and engaged for the morning, when we took them. You must find us another pair, for we are expected to dinner at my father's."

"At the Park, sir? Well, Mr. Geoffrey, it's most unfortunate; but this 'ere week—the races, you know, sir, being on—we've been a'most done out for 'osses; and there isn't a 'oss in the stables at this present moment, except the two you and this gentleman—(here the landlord made a short and parenthetic, but respectful, obeisance to the companion of the youth whom he was addressing)—excepting them two 'osses, sir, there ain't one left in the stables at this moment; not to *call* a 'oss; that is, not to put to a fly. I'm sure the number of flys I've sent off in various directions this last week is something beyond belief; all along of the races. There ain't an hour of the day

or night that it ain't a fly here, or a fly there, or a fly the other place; till I ain't got a fly left, leastways a 'oss. I could, mayhap, make out a pair this evening, Mr. Geoffrey, for I'm expecting the old grey back from a short job to Squire Harrington's, at the Grange; and there's the bay will be freshened up a bit. But he ain't got a leg just now."

"Not got a leg?"

"Not to stand on, Mr. Geoffrey, you know. The poor creatures be uncommon worked, certainly. I'm truly sorry if so be as your honoured father, Sir Walter, and my lady, was expecting you and this gentleman—(another short bow, accompanied by a scrutinising glance)—to dinner. But it'll be a pleasanter drive by a deal when the 'eat gets lowered a bit, and when you and this gentleman 'ave 'ad as good a dinner as my 'ouse can afford. The larder is worth a trial to-day, of all days that ever

came, I promise you. I have a choice bit of——"

"Well, Cuthbert, what say you? Suppose we stay to dine," said Geoffrey to his companion. "I dare say honest Parker will, somehow or other, make us out a good pair of horses in the evening. We shall have a much pleasanter drive, as he truly says—and I should like to show you Mandeville Park, and the old house for the first time, by such a glorious moonlight as we are likely to enjoy after this magnificent day."

"With great pleasure," replied the second youth; "and, to speak plainly, I was loth to go on until we had got news how to-day's races had resulted. You know, I have my betting book to square up."

"Well, gentlemen," said Parker, "I think you do wisely; and you shall have a dinner, I'll warrant you. Here, Thomas, take the gentlemen's things. Sorry it

should be so. If I 'ad 'ave only knowed you was agoing to come, the fly shouldn't a went to the Grange. This way, sir. You remember the conservatory room, sir, overlooking the brook? That's the room Sir Walter likes, Mr. Geoffrey, when he comes this way. And it is quite a claret day, I am sure. A bottle of good claret and a good cigar, after a good dinner, in the conservatory balcony over the brook, with a sight across country, sir, such as there ain't nowhere else in the whole county, just taking in the woods of Mandeville Park on the ridge of the farthest hill! Ah! sir, perhaps it's as well I ain't got no 'osses in the stable just at this moment—leastways, none to put to a fly, except it was a fly over a six-barred gate."

The other youth, whom Geoffrey Mandeville had called Cuthbert, and who had been gazing abstractedly into the sea of dazzle that lay outside the cool and cavernous porch, here looked round.

"Oh, you have saddle horses, then, though not draught, in your stables?" he said, glancing at Parker.

"I've one, sir; but he ain't mine, I'm sorry to say; and if he was, sir," added Parker, "you two gentlemen couldn't both ride him at once, like the picture in my little parlour of the two knights belonging to the Temple family; so it was no use for to name him—not," added mine host, turning briskly towards the two youths—"not but what he's a rare 'un! Here am I now twenty-seven years, come Michaelmas, in the Frederick and Pigtail, and I think such a 'oss never stood in stall of mine afore—'tis a sporting county, too: none more so!"

"How, such a horse?" said Geoffrey. "So fine?"

"So fine, sir, and so ongovernable like. I think he's only half broken or something."

"Who is his master, Parker?" asked Geoffrey, with interest.

But there was more interest still in the look of his companion, who silently awaited the innkeeper's reply to this query.

"Well," said Parker, "if you'll step round after dinner into the yard, when the gentleman's groom returns (he has locked the stable and got the key with him), he'll both show you the hanimal, and tell you whose hanimal he's to be. He was Mr. Childering's, that lives at the other side of the county. But the groom tells me he is sold to some rich London gentleman, a Mr. —Mr.— I forget his name, but I know there's a *worth* in it. Something *worth*."

"Why, he's worth something, you say!"

The landlord was in the midst of a dutiful burst of laughter, when he suddenly ceased, with his mouth open, as Cuthbert said—

"Poor wit, Geoffrey, poor wit. There is not any *worth* in that, at all events. But you were telling us, landlord?——"

"Well, sir, I forgot the London gentle-

man's name. He possessed a lot of railway property. But I seed him once. Ah! sir, a railway's one thing and a 'oss is another; and if he's wise, he'll never go for to mount that 'ere hanimal without making his will first. I expect the gentleman what was the former master this evening, from the races."

"You have not heard which horse has won?" asked Cuthbert.

"No, sir. It's too early yet to know that in Huntingferry."

"Very well," observed Geoffrey; "then you go and see what we can have for dinner by-and-by, say at half-past six; we will stroll out and amuse ourselves in the meantime. But, first, let us wash our hands."

"I'll see to it at once, sir. Here, Alice!"

The chambermaid, who, during this short conversation, had stood a little behind the master of the house, asked the young gentlemen to follow her, and tripped lightly upstairs, to show them a room for the purpose

which Geoffrey had mentioned. Cuthbert, who was restless to learn the issue of the races, had soon finished; he urged his friend to make haste, and they were presently in the main street of the little town. No decisive intelligence had yet arrived, although certain flying rumours, like those which shook the soul of Brussels on that wet and gloomy Sunday in 1815, had sufficed to collect a few groups on the shady side of the otherwise deserted street. But their talk was languid, and the excitement feeble, like the last outside ripple of the water when the plunge of a stone sends the receding circles to trace themselves further and further from the spot into which it is cast. It was easy to see that these groups, left behind out of a whole population, had caught up a sort of secondary interest in the races. As Geoffrey and Cuthbert passed, they opened out and saluted the former, whose name had transpired from the inn.

Halting at one of these greetings, the two young men learned that the group knew nothing, but that Mr. Owen, the saddler, across the bridge, always obtained the first news of the event. They proceeded thither at once; the personage whom they sought was, however, still ignorant of the result. They then determined to call upon him again after dining, and having looked at everything which seemed at all remarkable in the little town, they returned to the inn.

They had dined, and were sipping the claret of which their host had predicted their approbation.

"Well, then," said Geoffrey Mandeville, in continuation of some persuasions which he had been addressing to his friend, "we may consider that matter settled. You will sleep this night, at least, under my father's roof; and, if nothing can induce you to delay your return home, I'll drive you over

myself to-morrow to—to—what is the name of the place where you live? You know it is only ten miles beyond Mandeville Park."

"Lea Meadows," replied Cuthbert, reddening. "It is not so well known as Mandeville Park, nor are we Hardings so well known as the Mandevilles, who came over with the Conqueror, and, according to an old English report, found us here when they came. You have often spoken of your family."

He paused a moment, pressing and almost puckering his lips together, as was his wont when silent. A sort of frown contracted a forehead singularly massive and pallid, while his nostrils were dilated with a motion peculiar to a certain class of countenance.

"In fact," he added, "I am not sure, though very thankful to you that—that—"

"That what?"

"That we are at Eton no longer. There

—one's own pluck and one's own abilities—in short, we were then simply Geoffrey Mandeville and Cuthbert Harding."

"And what are we now, I should like to know? I'm sure I'm Geoffrey still. Why shouldn't you be the same Cuthbert? Nonsense, my dear fellow! You don't know my father; he'll like you—so will they all."

A vivid glance shot from the dark grey eyes of Cuthbert.

"You see, it is become a case of Mandeville Park and Lea Meadows. But I'm very stupid, and I know you are most kind—that is why you insist on this plan of yours. But how do I know that Sir Walter and Lady Mandeville—what, if—I remember the case of that poor, broken-spirited Tom Falconer, who went with an Eton friend, being otherwise uninvited, to pass last Christmas at Hazlebury. But I'm infernally boorish to requite your heartiness in this manner.

I'll come, and there's an end of it. After all, Mandeville Park is on my way."

"Of course you'll come, and there's an end of it, as you say. And now I suppose that Parker will have discovered the horses for us."

And Geoffrey rang the bell. The landlord answered it himself; but there was a rueful look on his countenance as he entered, and, with many apologies, he explained that he found himself unable to accommodate them according to his wishes and intentions. He had but one horse after all, and that one scarcely able to stir. He had sent all over the neighbourhood to beg, borrow, or hire another. Such a thing hadn't happened to him for the twenty-seven years he was in the Frederick and Pigtail, and to think that the first sufferer should be the son of Sir Walter Mandeville, the son of his earliest and best patron! It was, he repeated, all along of the races; although that wouldn't

have caused it, only that everything fell out crosslike just at that very moment. Doubtless, a little further on in the evening, he might manage. He would suggest to Mr. Geoffrey and his friend another bottle of claret in the meantime. This they declined; and Geoffrey asked for the bill, which he settled, telling the landlord forthwith to order the one-horse fly round.

"Put our things upon it, and let it proceed at once along the road to the Park," added Geoffrey. "Come, Cuthbert, we may as well stroll on at once. The chaise will overtake us."

The host withdrew to give orders accordingly.

We have noted the preceding circumstances carefully, slowly, and somewhat minutely, because, notwithstanding their apparent triviality, it will be found that they exercised a painfully important bearing on the events which rapidly followed.

As Geoffrey, putting on his hat, was about to leave the room, Cuthbert took out his purse.

"You have paid all," he said, "half is my debt—we are still merely travelling."

"Pooh! nonsense, Cuthbert; you know I'm much richer than you—you'll offend me."

The pale face of the boy to whom this rudely kind speech was addressed, became suddenly flushed; his mouth, which was handsome, but thin lipped, writhed; but the expression quickly passed into a smile, which seemed to correct or contradict the hasty gleam from the dark grey eyes, and the momentary contraction of the massive brows. Geoffrey observed nothing of this.

"As you please," said Cuthbert; "but, talking of money, we have both of us something on to-day's races, some bets together, and some bets with others. It must be known by this time which horse has won the last running."

Thus talking, they had descended the stairs, and exchanging greetings with the landlord, who awaited them in the low ceilinged, antler-hung hall, and who enfiladed them with a raking fire of Eastern salaams rather than English bows, they sallied forth upon their walk—the one-horse fly to overtake them, as ordered.

They found, first query, that, an outsider having won, and Geoffrey having backed the favourite, he had lost a few pounds. Cuthbert remarked, after glancing at some memoranda, that he was very considerably a winner.

"In fact," added he, "I could not well have lost; there were only two combinations out of thirty-five against me; I stood to gain at least twelve pounds in any other case. But, at Eton, it was impossible to command a sufficiently large breadth of betting."

"How stood to win in any case?" de-

manded Geoffrey. "Of course you just stood your chance, like others."

"No, there was no chance in the matter, except the chance of fellows not paying. I heard, long ago, that to make a book was simply a problem of downright calculation, and I soon saw how——"

"Well, *I* don't see it yet."

"I dare say not," replied Cuthbert, quietly; "but, though I'm not rich, you know I have, in my turn, a sort of pull over you."

"You mean that I'm not clever," said Geoffrey, with a highly offended air: "I know that very well."

"No, no, no," answered Cuthbert, after a glance keen and rapid. "I don't mean any such thing. I meant that you seldom take any trouble; and you don't need it as I do. Difficult things and troublesome things are not the same in themselves, although they are, perhaps, pretty much the same in the

upshot, if—but it is of little consequence. There's not much to win or lose on mere horses; at least, 'tis a life in itself, and such a life were scarce worth—I'm sure I shouldn't care for it."

"And yet you are a splendid horseman," remarked Geoffrey. "I wish I could ride as you do."

"As to that," laughed Cuthbert, "I could ride almost before I could walk, and the bone doesn't forget what the gristle learned."

They had now reached the upper end of the little town, lounging slowly along the middle of the road, when Geoffrey, happening to look back, stood suddenly still, and then exclaimed—

"Hollo! there's the white nag of our postboy at the door of Wilson, the chemist's shop. What the deuce brings him there? I hope nobody is ill at the Park."

At this they turned, and, ascending the whole length of the street, entered the shop.

Inside they found the chemist, a fussy, loquacious little man, in the act of labelling some phials behind his counter; against which, leaning with his back to it, stood Saunders, the letter-carrier of Mandeville Park, his bag slung under his arm. Although he was a postboy, yet, contrary to a great principle of logic, he was not a boy at all, but a light, spare, wizened, oldish man, with a sandy-coloured face, in the skin of which there were as many little lines as in Russian leather. He wore a peak cap, and was lazily masticating the stalk of a rose, as if he had been smoking a pipe of which the flower was the bowl. There was also in the shop a little boy, who seemed, like Saunders, to be waiting for some prescription.

On Geoffrey's entrance, he was immediately recognized and saluted with great respect by the messenger from the Park, who took the cap from his head and the rose

from his mouth. In answer to the young gentleman's inquiry, Saunders replied that the medicine which Mr. Wilson was preparing, was for Lady Mandeville.

"Is my mother unwell, then?" asked Geoffrey, in alarm: "my letters told me nothing of it!"

"Not to say unwell, sir; only a little ill-disposed. My lady is up, and looking in nearly her usual health, as I heard the butler say. I think 'tis a perwentive, sir, that my lady is sending for."

"I wish," muttered Geoffrey, "my mother would be persuaded to leave off this eternal quacking."

Mr. Wilson, the chemist, who had caught the word quacking, here observed, with an air slightly offended or, as it were, dignified and respectfully explanatory, that Mr. Geoffrey need not entertain any apprehension. Lady Mandeville was somewhat dyspeptic, and was suffering from a loss of appetite.

He had no doubt that the mixture which he had made up, and to which her ladyship was well accustomed, would restore her tone. He then remarked upon the weather, the races, the Emperor of Russia, and the wonders of table rapping, with placid volubility, proceeding meantime with the labelling and equipping of *two* bottles and of a pillbox.

"I have written the directions," he said, although he was still writing rapidly while he spoke. "One half of the mixture this evening, about half an hour after dinner. The pills at bedtime. I am sure, sir, your mother will find herself perfectly well in a day or two. The other half of the mixture to-morrow, after dinner, exactly as to-day."

He then handed one bottle and the little box to Saunders, the other bottle he gave to the small boy already mentioned, saying, "Here is the cleaning mixture, my lad, for Mr. Owen's, the saddler's fastenings. Tell Mr. Owen to be careful that he does not

leave it about; and do you be careful yourself, for it is a deadly poison. Children," he added, turning to Geoffrey, "are so apt to taste whatever comes in their way, sir."

"I'm sure I don't want to taste your things," said the urchin, darting off with his phial in the direction of the bridge, the same which the two young men had been pursuing, when the sight of the white pony induced them to return.

Meanwhile, Saunders mounted that animal, having thrust the medicines for which he had come into his pocket.

"Make haste, Saunders!" said Geoffrey; "I hope they will not have waited dinner for us. Explain that we could get no horses in this place when we arrived, and we have dined while waiting for them. We shall be at the Park not very long after you reach it yourself."

He little thought how soon afterwards he ought to be there!

Saunders cantered away with his message, and the two friends followed on foot at a leisurely pace. As they passed the inn, they learnt that the fly had not yet gone on, but was being then "put to." All this took a little time, and a little more was lost at the bridge, where they stopped a few moments to gaze down the pretty vale through which the stream beneath them went sparkling. It was a lovely evening—they were not in a hurry—the view was charming—and here they loitered, leaning on the parapet, while they lit a cigar. This done, they resumed their journey.

CHAPTER II.

"Alone, but with unbated zeal,
That horseman plied the scourge and steel."
Lady of the Lake.

Across the bridge rose the long and gradual hill to which the innkeeper had drawn their attention, when praising what he styled his "conservatory room," a flowery projecting balcony, suspended, like the ancient hanging gardens of Babylon, over the rushing waters;—and, upon the first slope of this hill, the fag end or suburb of the little town had fixed itself. Here were situated the saddler's and harness-maker's shop, to which the boy had just fetched from Mr. Wilson's—while Geoffrey and

Cuthbert were there—the cleaning mixture, or what the chemist intended for such. The shop in question was decidedly the most flourishing establishment which the pleasant town of Huntingferry boasted.

Cuthbert and Geoffrey were examining, ere they passed on, the whips and other articles displayed in the broad, low window, when Mr. Owen himself appeared in the doorway with the same lad whom they had seen at the chemist's. He was pushing the child with both hands, or, rather, was in act to push—the lad being equally in act to dart away, and looking round merely to hear his master's parting orders before a good vigorous rush.

"Tell Mr. Wilson," said the saddler, "that I don't know how he can be so stupid —that this is not the cleaning mixture, but some medicine stuff. Let him change it for you at once, and you run back here immediately."

The urchin flew off as he was bidden.

We may observe that, at this moment, the white horse of Saunders, the letter-carrier, could be seen by Geoffrey and Cuthbert standing clear out against the sky line, on the summit of the long hill before them. The next instant he disappeared behind the ridge. They were about to lounge forward in the same direction, when the saddler, saluting them, engaged their attention.

"A sweet evening, gentlemen," observed he, thrusting his hands into his trouser's pockets, and inhaling with zest the balmy air; "so Nugget has won, after all!"

"Yes, confound him!" said Geoffrey. "Nugget has won—who'd have thought it?"

"Few, sir, did think it," returned the saddler. "Some bets, sir, I presume?"

"Yes, on the favourite."

"Ah! that's unlucky. Talk of public opinion being always right, sir; public

opinion very often finds its level on a race-course. Public opinion, sir, is not a prophet. How Mr. Bloundel has lost, to be sure!"

Not being under the necessity of making more progress than they chose till the fly overtook them, and probably feeling the lazy influence of that delicious evening, the two friends lingered, for a few moments, to hear the disjointed gossip which Mr. Owen proceeded to retail to them about the Course. In the midst of his communications the group was disturbed by the return of the saddler's errand boy. The child was breathless with running, and apparently with alarm.

"Well, Tommy, where's the mixture?"

"I hain't got it, sir."

"Why, what's the matter? Didn't I distinctly tell you——"

"Yes, sir," interrupted the little fellow, opening his eyes widely, as children are

wont when they have a story or a wonder to tell; "yes, sir, but Mr. Wilson wouldn't give me anything; but when he saw the bottle he said he was ruined, and then he began to tear his hair what's on the side of his head, and said as how he had sent you Lady Mandeville's mixture, and that there would be murder at the Park, for that he gave Saunders the poison by mistake, and that it had no colour or smell no more than the mixture, and then he took down some bottles, and ran out of the shop without his hat, and I saw him run into Mr. Parker's inn—and that's all."

"And enough too!" cried the saddler.

Geoffrey stood for a moment, pale, silent, and horror-stricken. He then exclaimed, with a truly scared aspect—

"Saunders must be two miles on the road already; he is riding fast; it is out of the question to overtake him with the fly and that worn-out horse. My mother is to

take the medicine half an hour after dinner. Good Heavens! it will be as soon as Saunders arrives—they dine at eight! What is to be done?"

At this moment, the fly which had been ordered to follow the two young gentlemen came thundering furiously over the bridge, with their luggage piled on the roof. The driver was lashing the jaded animal, which strained along painfully, but stoutly. Inside sat a man pale as a corpse, and staring with a wild and haggard expression. On seeing Geoffrey and Cuthbert on the side of the road, the driver pulled suddenly up, while the man inside the vehicle uttered an exclamation of horror, and hid his face in his hands. It was the unfortunate chemist, who having discerned the fatal blunder of which he had been guilty, had delayed but to provide himself with the stomach pump and other remedies, and had rushed to the inn to procure some conveyance. At the

door of that establishment he had found the fly, ready to start for the Park. He hastily explained the case to the landlord, who, having at his disposal, as the reader knows, only the horse then and there harnessed, and no other present means whatever of speeding the apothecary to his destination, shoved him forthwith into the vehicle, and bade the postboy gallop the whole way though he killed the horse.

With as little delay as Mr. Wilson's own self-accusatory interjections had unavoidably caused, all this was explained in answer to the rapid questions put by Cuthbert, who then ascertained that the apothecary had all the necessary remedies in a paper parcel, to which he pointed beside him on the seat.

Cuthbert seemed an inch taller: turning to his friend, who was stamping about with frantic gestures—

"Geoffrey," he said, in a loud, ringing

voice, "here are ten minutes good saved out of the fire for you; jump on the box; see that this man drives the animal to the top of its physical capacity; if it break down, you will have but part of the road, instead of the whole, to run on foot. Leave the rest to me. I'll be there before you, and before Saunders. I'll get Childering's horse —by Heaven I will! On, on! Good courage, Geoffrey."

Away went the vehicle, while he was yet speaking, as if his voice had electrified the driver and Geoffrey, who urged the horse into the rickety gallop of which alone it was capable.

Cuthbert no sooner saw them off than he turned to Mr. Owen.

"Do you know Mr. Childering's horse?" he said. "Dare I ride him in a snaffle? You had better give me, at need, a bridle and bit on which I may confidently rely."

The instant Cuthbert had finished the

sentence—"You had better," etc., Owen, as if he had been actually prepared for the order, although, in truth, he had not expected it, rushed, without saying a word, into his back shop, and presently returned with a bit containing a lower bar, curb chain, and double-reined bridle, which he gave to Cuthbert. While the latter was considering them, Owen observed—

"I don't know this horse, sir; but Mr. Childering is the best and boldest rider in the county—he always prefers my bridles, and according to his experience with that particular pattern which you now have in your hand, you are master of any horse on the forward, whether he yet have his mouth or not. Of course, you would be cautious of bringing him down."

But Cuthbert was already moving away. He stopped to ask where the nearest blacksmith's was; and Mr. Owen telling him it was next door but one on this side of the

inn, he passed the bridge hastily, with the bridle over his arm, and entered the stithy.

The saddler, urged by the interest and excitement which had gained upon him, glanced nervously along the road, in the opposite direction, and saw the fly still labouring furiously up the hill, enveloped in dust, and fast nearing the summit. He then, without waiting to get his hat, wrapped his coloured pocket handkerchief around his hat, to protect him from the westering sun, which was still powerful, and pursued Cuthbert across the bridge. He saw this last emerge, in great haste, from the smithy, followed by a man carrying some instruments; he saw him stride, still followed by the smith, to the inn door, where Parker was standing, surrounded by a group of listeners, to whom he was doubtless relating what had befallen at the chemist's shop, and leaving them to calculate what would soon befall at Mandeville

Park. Mr. Owen, seeing Parker lift up his hands, as if in boundless astonishment, at the first words which Cuthbert addressed to him, could restrain his curiosity and impatience no longer, but fairly ran over the intervening space till he made one of the little crowd outside the Frederick and Pigtail. As he arrived, Cuthbert was speaking; his manner was resolute in the extreme, but not excited; he was calm, with, however, something dangerous in his look.

"You mentioned that before," he said, "to my friend, Mr. Geoffrey Mandeville. The horse is not yours. I'll answer for the horse: all Mandeville Park will answer for him. As to the stable being locked, you mentioned that too. Look you, time is life in this matter, and you are taking it away. You are the murderer of Lady Mandeville! Delay me but by another syllable, and her blood be on your head! Show me the stable, and as this fine steed may be difficult

to bridle, and even to approach, let your ostler come round to help me—that's all we want of you. Here is a smith who will pick the lock."

"Why don't you do as the gentleman says?" interposed mine host's wife, now for the first time appearing. "Follow me, sir; *I'll* show you the stable!" and, as she forced her way out into the porch, she continued, with reverted head: "I am ashamed of you, John; and Lady Mandeville, poor dear lady, going to be poisoned!"

Parker, at this, hurried down the archway at the side of the inn, followed by Cuthbert, the smith, and the crowd. As he proceeded (time not being any longer lost, Cuthbert now ungrudgingly allowed him to vent all his sentiments freely), mine host gave utterance to the thoughts which clashed with each other in his mind.

"Well, certainly, if the smith be here, sir —and though it ain't my horse, that's why

I can't forbid you—and doubtless her ladyship must not be allowed to be poisoned, if we can hinder it. This way, sir! You take the responsibility, sir? 'Tis a clear case enough. Any one may see that. But it would be useless to ask *me* to mount that 'ere hanimal, were it never so! I wouldn't save the queen's neck by a riding of him—no, that I wouldn't."

All this time, I say, they were making progress through the back yards, and Cuthbert's good humour had returned. He said—

"No, honest Parker, you would break your own by such an experiment. But I see the stable, where that little boy, who ran on before us, is standing. I thought so; you need not come any further."

While the smith was picking the lock, Cuthbert desired the crowd to fall back from the door, in order not to excite the animal needlessly by the noise of voices.

He then took off his neckcloth, and belted it round his waist, the crowd watching his every movement with intense interest and excitement, and becoming suddenly silent on witnessing this last.

The door was opened in a few seconds, and Cuthbert entered the stable with the ostler, to whom he handed the bridle which he had brought from Mr. Owen's. Scarcely a minute, though it seemed a far longer period to the expectant groups, elapsed, ere the young man reappeared in the yard. He was followed by the ostler, who led out a noble chestnut horse, plunging violently. Cuthbert, pulling his hat firmly down on his brows, approached him, patted him on the neck, spoke to him soothingly, and arranged the stirrup leathers to the length which he desired, judging as well as he could by the eye. This, however, was the longest operation of all. It was both difficult to take, and dangerous to retain, the

stirrup leathers. The peculiar action of the splendid animal, meantime, as he fretted rapidly round the yard in the ostler's hold, was not lost upon Cuthbert, who asked the ostler whether he was not a "buck jumper."

"Why, sir, I believe he's every kind of jumper; but, once off, he is fast enough. Give him his head, sir—give him his head; he's at the end of the mile a'most as soon as he's at the beginning of it. You see, I've planted the saddle well off the withers, sir!"

"Let go the rein the instant I am in the saddle," cried Cuthbert; and almost as he spoke he vaulted clean from the ground. The ostler obeyed, and Cuthbert was fixed in his seat, a light hand low upon the bridle, his form slightly bending with every motion of the horse, and his mind vigilant and intent to make thorough acquaintance with this new and puissant servant. At first, the horse moved aside with a gentle

dancing motion, his neck arched, his eyeballs glaring, his whole frame trembling with mettle and excitement. But, when his rider would bring him to the entrance of the yard, where the little crowd, which had been somewhat increased, was nestling in a corner near the gate, the horse suddenly swerved with violence, and turning fairly round, made a bolt towards the stable. Mastered by one sharp but temperate touch of the powerful nether rein, he reared almost to the perpendicular, and then broke into a series of furious plunges, writhing the back with that peculiar motion which renders it impossible to all but a very rare horseman to keep the saddle. Now began that contest which is at the same time so beautiful and so terrible to behold, between a mighty steed in all his disdain, spirit, and strength, refusing the mastery of man, and a fearless rider determined to impose it.

They were in a large, straw-littered, inner

yard, which communicated, by a low, broad gate, now open, with the outer yard, from which the archway led out into the street. It was near this open gate, on the further side, that the innkeeper and the rest of the spectators had gathered, and were still standing. At this moment the clock of the town church rang the three-quarters past eight. "It is too fast, sir—five minutes too fast!" cried the innkeeper.

Cuthbert perceived that while the group remained near the gate, it would be a slow and almost hopeless attempt to get his horse through. He called out to them to withdraw. They had hardly done so when, as he was borne towards the opening, in a succession of sidelong, curveting, bounding plunges, like a weatherly craft upon a straining tack in a storm, a man in the smart livery of a gentleman's groom appeared suddenly running to the gateway, across the further or outer yard.

"Hollo! young gentleman!" he cried out, closing the gate, "are you tired of your existence?"

"Have a care of your own!" shouted Cuthbert, as the animal, shying at the clang of the closing gate, again wheeled violently, and bore him to the rear; "have a care of your own!"

The groom climbed over the gate into the inner yard.

"Come, sir," he said, approaching; "you just get down off that horse, if you please; he's in my care. By the law!" added the groom, with a terrified look, "he'll be killed off-hand."

This exclamation was elicited by a new and tremendous effort of the steed to throw his dauntless rider. Shaking his neck, and slightly dipping his head, he flung himself into the air, off all four feet at the same moment. But Cuthbert's blood was up. The progress of the desperate struggle seemed

but to raise within him the true spirit of buoyant energy and "derring dee."

"Oh!" he cried to the groom, "I'll give him leave to throw me!"

And then, shaking the reins and settling himself well in the saddle, he uttered a kind of loud defiant cheer or laugh—it might be either—to which the horse seemed almost to reply, for, as if tired of his unavailing struggles, or at length satisfied that he bore a rider worthy of him, he raised a sharp, whinnying neigh, and sprang forward. The low gate was still closed, and they went easily and flowingly over it, while the groom stood gazing from the other side, like one in a dream. Obeying the hand, the noble animal bent a little to the right, and swept gracefully and lightly under the archway into the street, and then towards the bridge in an increasing gallop.

The pace still mended as he came to the foot of the hill; the generous brute, no

sooner perceiving the long vista of the adverse rise, which seemed to be delaying his progress, than he put forth all his transcendent vigour. Now he compensated for his previous recalcitrance. As if he had become at last aware that some high and gallant interest depended upon his fleetness that evening—as if he knew that, on this occasion, or never, he was bound to show what he was worth—as if he had sympathetically caught the fiery solicitude and eagerness of his rider—he scarcely seemed to touch the long, dusty ascent up which he dashed. The fly had for some minutes disappeared behind the summit of the hill, ere Cuthbert had been borne with a sound of receding thunder from the hearing of those who watched his departure. The landlord had hastened upstairs to the balcony of the room where Geoffrey Mandeville and his friend had dined. There he found his wife before him. They looked eagerly out upon

the beautiful acclivity, clothed in woods, over which the declining sun now threw a flood of crimson tints. But not the woods, in their wealth of summer foliage, nor the bright tints, nor the peaceful evening prospect of that delicious landscape, engaged their attention.

They watched for another sight; they watched to behold, rising from the dusty hollow, upon the long white road, the daring rider and the matchless steed, speeding upon the dread errand of Life or Death.

"There!—there he is!" cried the hostess. "Oh, merciful heaven! what a pace! It makes me dizzy to look, John. Oh, the dear young gentleman! Yes—fly—fly! Ah! may you come to the Park in time! Ah, John, how could you but think of the time when we were married, and when that dear lady—a child then, John—took such trouble to see us comfortably settled. And to think of what may be given to her this

evening as medicine! Oh, dear, dear! Saunders must be near the Park Lodge by this time. I almost think I see the white pony in my mind—and where, where is the noble chestnut horse? Indeed, indeed, my eyes are blinded!"

And so they were; the good woman's tears fell fast, in her excitement. She wiped them with the corner of her apron, and, looking forth again, exclaimed—

"There!—see!—he is on the top of the hill, against the sky! He is gone!"

Thus it was—so brief the vision—so fiercely fleet that grand rush of the brave horse. Like a dream he passed upwards towards the evening sky—like a dream he vanished behind the horizon.

Mrs. Parker clasped her hands, and, with a long sigh, exclaimed again—

"Oh! may he—may he be in time!"

CHAPTER III.

"Clarens! sweet Clarens! birthplace of deep love!
Thine air is the young breath of passionate thought!"
Childe Harold.

WHILE Cuthbert is riding with such headlong speed from Huntingferry, we will alight before him at the scene of his destination. There was a dinner party at Mandeville Park that evening; and the majestic banquet-hall, ascending to the whole height of the building itself, and spreading its groined ceiling immediately below the roof—that great and ancient banquet-hall where more than one sovereign of England had been magnificently entertained — where belted knights and gallant nobles had feasted ere setting out to the French wars of our Plan-

tagenet kings, so enchantingly recounted by a monk, beneath whose cassock throbbed a hero's and a poet's heart in one—that old hall where, although not in the highbacked chair of darkly resplendent Spanish oak, which now guarded its place at the head of the table, had once sat, as master of the mansion and the estates of the Mandevilles, their maternal ancestor—the gentlest, the most skilful, and the bravest of all the chiefs whose deeds are recorded in the honour-worshipping chronicles of Froissart; that hall now blazed with chandeliers in the centre, glittered with gold and silver plate upon the massive buffets at the sides, and rose into tall and nodding shadows near the four corners, and along the mysterious and grimly-smiling ceiling. The ceiling of this apartment, as I have said, was here, at least, the roof of the edifice.

Four ages told their story in the scene around you. The slow sweep of the lofty

vault above had hung over those who fought in Bosworth Field—who beheld the ferocious death-struggle of Richard the Third, as he fell despairing in his youth—and who assisted in raising the adventurous Duke of Richmond into the politic, wary, and parsimonious Henry the Seventh. The music loft, with its mighty balustrade of darkly gleaming and everlasting timber, had been constructed in the time and in the taste of Elizabeth's reign. Nay, she had herself listened to the strains which fell from the dimness of that half-seen gallery, when she sojourned a day and a night with her trusty and illustrious subject Sir Bomund de Mandeville. The gold beaker from which she drank stood, at this moment, upon the mighty table before Sir Walter's accustomed chair. A less remote age had, on every side, clothed the walls with their durable and beauteous apparel, for the wainscoting was the handiwork of Inigo Jones.

The giant fireplace, which was a little room in itself, and which recalled the warlike winter gatherings of ruder and earlier times than any we have mentioned, was—to paraphrase an expression of Dante's—"*tacque il sol*"—silent of a fire on this beautiful summer evening; but the tall, old-fashioned spires of its polished dogs were blinking and winking, and glittering, in the rays of the lamps and pendant lights. In a certain part of this hall, the floor rang hollow to the footstep. Far, far down beneath wound the long disused passages which had led to the dungeons in times when the fair and radiant park was a feudal chase, and the modern country palace a Norman baron's stronghold—when the jurisdiction of a petty sovereign had not yet dissolved into that of a great county magistrate, and when the head of the Mandevilles reckoned rather the spears of valiant and devoted retainers, than the votes of free

constituents. Suits of ancient armour hung against the walls, and effigies of the men who had worn them stood in still array at their posts. So great was the space that, although a cluster of lights threw down a flood of radiance on the table which stood in the centre of the floor, the more distant parts of the hall receded into comparative darkness, where the shadows seemed flitting to and fro, separating, assembling again, conferring with silent gesticulations, and creeping into corners or dispersing, to allow a servant bearing a candle to pass; then suddenly gathering behind him, in capricious groups, which appeared to menace him as he withdrew. Amidst this indistinctly receding vastness, the brilliant table glittered like a fairy island, all light and sparkle, stricken forth into multiplied effulgence by the gold and the silver, the exquisitely enchased stand, or epergne, which occupied its centre, and the wilderness of many coloured

flowers with which that stand overflowed on every side. The nestling flowers were stretching forth their delicate heads to gaze down on the splendour around, and thus a miniature garden—in all that a garden has rarest and most perfect—added, with unexpected grace, the effects of nature to those of art. The flowers looked as though they had archly come to surprise, with their breathing bloom, the fixed and frigid elegance of ornaments which were not so living as they, yet not to die so soon. Not tenderness, but searching wounds—not the maternal breath of summer, but the torture of the chisel, had shaped that pallid beauty, and it would last for ever. A little fountain flashed up into a slender column of light from the midst of the flowers, and fell, in a tent-like canopy of silver sprays, with a gentle, tinkling music, into a crystal well. A fragrance, tender yet subtle, ascended like that fountain, but sprinkled its invisible jets

over a far larger area, and permeated the entire atmosphere of the hall with its delicious refreshments.

Thick, soft, and heavy hung before the windows the folds of the long curtains, and thus was the fading sunset light of summer forbidden to contend with, or disturb, the indoor effects with which wealth, taste, imagination, genius, and ancient memories, had filled the banqueting-room of Mandeville Park. As a servant happened to open a window, in order to close it more perfectly, the cawing of a populous rookery was borne from the great trees outside into the echoing hall.

The dressing bell had rung, the dinner bell had rung, and the guests—first the gentlemen, then, gradually, the ladies—had appeared in, and passed from, the drawing-room—not the chief drawing-room, used only on great occasions,—but still a very stately and beautiful apartment. To reach

this room, they had come by various passages, and various splendid galleries; some from the great western tower, others from the opposite wing, all from quarters which possessed distinct traditions, partially indicated to the inquisitive, or to the learned in the history of great families, by the style of the furniture, by a piece of tapestry, by a portrait, by a relic, by a hundred memorial signs. Paintings of value abounded. Busts and statues stood where the figures gave the idea of life or of recollection to the silent place. Windows of stained glass suffused all objects with a warm glow, and upheld against the sky which they concealed the lineaments of many a famous ancestor, or those heraldic bearings which had quartered into the shield of the Mandevilles the arms of half the noble families in the three kingdoms. On the lower landings of the great double staircase, which swept majestically upwards, from a feudal-looking vestibule of

great extent and elevation, into opposite wings of the mansion, stood moresque figures, lifting on high each a flickering torch, which gave to the lustrous swarthiness of his complexion, the contrasting white of his glaring eyes, and the almost necromantic malice of his meaning smile, something unearthly, strange, eldritch, and weird. Children and ladies on a visit passed these figures at night with a sidelong glance of suspicion and a hastened step.

The architecture was Gothic, and at every turn—protruding from cornices, and perched on angles—there seemed earnestly scanning you some hideous countenance; as though the dreaming stone had broken into a visible nightmare, and had gone mad with terror, or with rage. Some of these faces, horrible as they were, looked at you profoundly with a grisly smile, which seemed to say, "You think me unhappy—you

think me in torture, the face of some soul in penal fires; no, no—I smile—I am something else—move on; come, go; come, go; you will find me here again! When you have fretted out your little time, you will find me smiling still. I smile; I look on. Yes—for I wait."

For thus it is; "art is long, and life is short"—*ars longa vita brevis.*

Outside the building the peacock swept and strutted amid the glories of the terrace-ranged, fountain-tinkling, statue-peopled, grotto-varied, alley-shaded garden. Beyond declined, in gradual and unequal falls of landscape, the undulated park; here, opening into peaceful views of distant farms and pastures; there, wrapping in closer folds around the building its proud mantle of woods. The trees formed, in some places, long and broad avenues, linking their arms overhead; in others, were gathered into dense battalions; in others, they had sepa-

rated into small groups, as if conferring apart by whispers, and moving their heads with listening attitude to the breeze; while some stood singly aloof, in majestic attitude, surveying the diversified and imposing scene around them. A boat slept over its own shadow on a grove-margined sapphire pool, in a dell. As copses were blended with the woods of larger timber, so patches of fern diapered, in one or two spots, the richer sward. Among the shadows, or athwart the yellow stripes of the evening sunshine in the glades, moved capriciously the troops of deer, under their antlered captains. Over all, upon the summit of several convergent, terrace-like hills, at the highest, or nearly the highest, point in the county, the splendid quadrangular mansion itself lifted its bright helmet of many towers to the clouds; and against the sky, from the loftiest of them, the banner of the Mandevilles was floating like a plume.

CHAPTER IV.

" We shall soon know the whole,
For here comes Illo, full of haste and joyous."
SCHILLER'S *Death of Wallenstein.*

IN the drawing-room, near the window, with the light, as it were, of rubies and topazes streaming through the stained glass upon her fair and still youthful-seeming tresses, amidst the beautiful furniture (so many portions of which almost claimed the character of artistic productions, from the harmonious design and the exquisite workmanship)—amidst this furniture, beneath a line of striking portraits, some of them ancestral, impanelled in the walls, sat, in the chequered light we have described, Lady Mandeville.

Two or three ladies were around her. They were in evening costume, but yet seemed to form a familiar group. Their dress and occupations blended the forms of a stately sphere with the effects of that domestic influence which the character and habits of their hostess exhaled. She never could seem otherwise than the great territorial princess; but, at the same time, all around her breathed of home and home tastes. A piano and a harp were near. By her side stood a work-table, and she was engaged in some embroidery. Five or six other ladies were present. Her guests, like the reader, were aware that she felt somewhat unwell; and, accordingly, the usual glance which telegraphs among the fair sex the signal of retirement from table, had passed almost as soon as the dessert began to circulate.

"I like coming away early," said Mrs. Finchley, the parson's wife. "What a wonderfully clever man Mr. Melcombe seems.

I want to ask you about him, Lady Mandeville."

"The gentlemen will not soon join us," said Lady Mandeville, "for Lord Solent, I believe," she added, addressing the Marchioness of Solent, "wishes to confer maturely with Sir Walter about the state of parties."

"Yes," replied the marchioness. "Sir Walter must know how much our party in the Lower House desires he would take the leadership, and Solent merely bears to him an assurance of the unanimous feeling of the same great section among the peers. Sir Walter is the only man, as Solent says, who knows how to conciliate the new something or other with the old, the old—well, it don't much matter. I know it is something or other, too."

"Yes," replied Lady Mandeville: "and that being so, will you, Mrs. Finchley, excuse me if I request you to touch the bell

within your reach? I feel rather unwell, and I am sure you will forgive me if I take something which my doctor prescribes to me at this hour."

"Oh, pray do," replied the marchioness, anticipating Mrs. Finchley, and pulling the bell.

"I know what is the matter with you," said Mrs. Finchley, with a sympathetic look. "It is mind, soul, enthusiasm, genius. I suffered so much once — until I married Astolphus for love. I am sure I should die, only I haven't time with my family. I never thought we should come to be such a tribe — dear Astolphus and I. But, I believe, in the Church it always happens so —when the living is not large. As soon as Sir Walter gave dear Astolphus the new cure of Hurstbrigg, I thought it would have stopped. But it is all for the best, and Astolphus's sermons are a great relief; the —the—poetry finds a vent somehow——"

Here a servant out of livery entered.

"When Saunders returns from Hunting-ferry," said Lady Mandeville, "bring me the tonic here."

The groom of the chambers said, "yes, my lady," and withdrew.

"No, I assure you, my dear Mrs. Finchley, my ailment has nothing to do with the mind. I have no pretensions to either the privileges or the penalties of what you call soul and genius."

"Come, now, dear Lady Mandeville," slily persisted little Mrs. Finchley—"do not think me rude, but have you not helped Sir Walter in that exquisite passage of his great poem about the two girlish friends, the daughters of the two chiefs—you know what I mean—where there are some willows, and, if memory serves me, a windmill also, and there's a breeze, and a——"

"Most certainly, I never helped him," returned the fair wife, her eyes sparkling

with a flash that might almost seem indignation, a faint smile dimpling her cheek, however, and sweetening the otherwise too withering glance which she darted at poor Mrs. Finchley. "Not only I did not help him, but I could not. I think," she added, "that this order, and, indeed, this quality of poetry can sufficiently vindicate their own origin. There is no woman living—and, if such a remark can come fittingly from Walter Mandeville's wife, only one man, who could have written either that or many other passages in a poem nearly as well known now among the brighter minds of foreign lands as of our own."

"It is true," said a sweet, low voice, in a slightly foreign accent. "Sir Walter's fame has made itself a word in every civilized country; it is purer and greater than Sir Walter Manney's was in my countryman's page; it will last for ever, and it has rendered even this very habitation as fami-

liar an object to every young eye which loves to linger over the pictures of interesting spots abroad, as it can be in his own country. Therefore it would be an affront to inform us. We have learnt all. We are not strangers to genius. It is not in poetry alone that we know him. We know also, believe me, even we women, how high is his place among the most original, philosophic thinkers, and the most shining political orators, of England. But in his poetry there is not, as miladi so truly says, anything of hers—for, *à la vérité*, no woman's muse at all is here, but something very different."

"When the little Henrietta is somewhat older, and when she begins to read the classical moderns, it will be a singular pleasure to you, madame, to tell her that the English passages which she will compare with some of the sweetest in Tasso, are to be found in the great work of her own father."

The speaker was a darkly-beautiful young woman with a pale complexion. She seemed about twenty. Lady Mandeville flushed to the temples, a tear stood in her eyes, and her whole face glowed with mingled pleasure and confusion. She was still a very charming and lovely woman, some ten years older than Madame de Sainte Seine—that is, about five and thirty, an age which she scarcely looked. The feelings with which she regarded Sir Walter were those of boundless admiration and true self-effacing love. The love he fully reciprocated, and, indeed, the admiration also, though it was of a totally different kind; for this quality, like ivy, must take the form of that which it covers. He admired her gentle heart, her lofty principles, her noble and disinterested spirit, her accomplished mind; candid, intelligent, full of taste, singularly feminine, graceful, elegant, and agile. She was not that fine monster—more often feigned than

seen—the woman who exercises (?) a man's mental faculties; and not being that monster, it had not come into her head to pretend that she was. Men, and especially able men, wish for the woman in the wife; it is weak, but natural. Sir Walter believed that his wife was and would continue to be feminine, and she never disappointed his calculation. We are aware that the taste we here ascribe to most men, and in a special manner to men of ability, is very spiritless, mean, and despicable; and that all masculine-souled women, if we may be permitted the expression, proclaim that such men are afraid, for example, of their powers in discussion. These craven-hearted men, in their turn, whenever we have taunted them to that effect, smile, as though they really thought a miserable evasion could settle such a question, and reply—

"Hang it! After all, one doesn't marry for the sake of discussion. Besides, no

woman does discuss," add these slanderers. "A woman has an immensity to say, when she is bent on it. But that sort of thing is not discussion, you know."

As might be expected from the prevalence of this base prejudice, few male-minded ladies find their opportunity to marry. When they do, the husband is tempted to prefer an amicable talk with any other lady to a "discussion" with his wife. Lady Mandeville was not of the class here indicated. In order to hide her pleasurable confusion at Madame de Sainte Seine's allusion to Sir Walter's renown, she took advantage of the reference to her daughter, Henrietta, to ask—

"And where is my little daughter?—where is Henrietta?"

"I met her just now as I came from my room. She is, in great delight, changing her garden dress; for you have given her leave, she says, to come here for a few moments,

before the gentlemen have quitted the dining-hall."

The words were hardly uttered when there entered a beautiful girl of about ten. Her figure was slight and delicate. The expression of the face was pensive. She was fair, like her mother; the forehead oval, elegant, and of snowy whiteness; the eyes dark blue; the tresses a pale gold, which would yet deepen into a rich soft brown. At present, as she moved her graceful throat, a faint brightness, like a halo, shimmered from the glossy curls—a cascade of rays which never seemed to settle, but always to be falling, and, as it were, vanishing around the beauteous young head.

"And where have you been this beautiful day, Henrietta?" said the Marchioness of Solent, drawing the child to her.

"I have been in the garden all the morning, and on the tower very often this evening."

"What were you doing on the tower?"

"Looking for the white pony, because mamma is not well, and I know Saunders is gone to bring something which will do her good. I saw Saunders entering the lodge gates as I came down just this moment. He will be here immediately."

"And in the garden what were you doing?" pursued the marchioness.

"Oh! in the garden, I was reading, part of the time, with my governess, and talking French with Madame de Sainte Seine. I wish, mamma, you would let me leave off French!" added she, in a coaxing, cajoling, beseeching tone. "Do, mamma, dear!"

"And when the French was over, what next?"

"Why, then," interrupted Madame de Sainte Seine, "she ran off to the fruit garden; but though she appeared very energetically engaged, I could not understand her occupation."

"I was poking the asparagus beds with the top of my parasol, to make the asparagus come up faster. Geoffrey used to like asparagus before he went to Eton, and he is coming back to-night."

At this moment the servant entered with a small salver, on which were a decanter of water, a wine glass, and a little phial. He placed the tray on a table by Lady Mandeville's chair, saying—

"Saunders has brought this, my lady. He saw Mr. Geoffrey at Huntingferry; but there was no horse to be had in the town at that moment, in consequence of the races. Mr. Geoffrey, therefore, could not come on so quickly as he had purposed, but he said to Saunders, my lady, that he would follow later."

"This evening?"

"Oh, yes, my lady; so I understood from Saunders. But it may be late. Is anything else required except the water, my lady?"

Lady Mandeville glanced at the label on the phial, and replied—

"No; you can withdraw. Of course Mr. Geoffrey's room is ready? He speaks of some friend; let the room in the tower be prepared, therefore."

When the servant had retired, Henrietta sprang forward, seized the phial, and exclaimed—

"Oh, mamma, let me pour it out. I know exactly how to measure it. I've watched you do it before. It is just up to the top of the cut part of the glass; then the water."

"Well, my dear, be careful. Do not poison your mother," returned Lady Mandeville.

The child looked up with her lips parted, and, seeing her mother smiling, said—

"This is not poison—it is medicine."

Having poured the deadly draught which was supposed to be medicine into the

glass, she was holding the glass up between herself and the window, as she had seen her mother do, when the earth seemed to palpitate as if some faint beat bore rapidly by; and a shuddering, quickly iterated and transient sound, like the rushing hoof-prints of a charger or a racer in his grandest stride, was heard for a moment; it passed round the house, and died away. At the same instant a something, swift as the storm-driven cloud, but low and near the earth, had appeared to shoot by the windows. The stained glass prevented this object from being distinguished.

"How curious!" said Lady Mandeville. "Was that the sound of wings? But we have no large birds round the Park!"

"There are herons, mamma, down in the hollow, near the pool; but that was not a heron. I thought it was a horse galloping."

The child had, meantime, satisfied herself with the measurement of the medicine, and

exclaiming, "Now, mamma, you are going to be cured!" extended her hand with the glass towards Lady Mandeville, who took it mechanically.

She was in the act of raising it to her lips, when a scream from Mrs. Finchley arrested her. Following the direction of that lady's gaze, she saw that the door had been thrown violently open. In the aperture stood the groom of the chambers, past whom had rushed a young man—bare throated, his handkerchief belted round his waist, his hair dishevelled, his face dark with dust and perspiration, his forehead stained with blood. At this sudden apparition, another but slight scream escaped Mrs. Finchley, who happened to be sitting with her face towards the door. The rest of the ladies turned.

Meanwhile, the intruder, who was a stranger, had scanned with a quick glance the group before him. The next moment, darting across the apartment, he firmly and

quickly, but gently, seized the wine glass which Lady Mandeville still held in her hand.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Lady Mandeville, as the phial was thus snatched from her, "what means this conduct? Markham!" she cried to the servant, "who is this person? And how comes he to be admitted?"

The servant advanced, with a perplexed and alarmed air, and stammered something incoherent, in which "Mr. Wilson, the apothecary," were the only distinguishable words.

The youth who had so strangely broken into the stately circle stood in front of Lady Mandeville, with one hand pressed to his side, and the other grasping the phial, which he examined curiously: he was panting, as if he would gain breath to speak.

"Who are you, sir? And what is your business here?" said the lady of the house.

"Have you drunk any of this potion, Lady Mandeville?" demanded he.

"No; I have not yet tasted it."

The expression of his face changed: he staggered towards a chair instinctively, and catching the back of it, as if to support himself, although he still stood with a not ungraceful air, he exclaimed:—

"Then I am in time! This bottle contains poison! Wilson, the chemist, at Huntingferry, interchanged, by mistake, two phials, yours and another, which he chanced to be preparing when your son Geoffrey and I were in his shop. He discovered his mistake only some time after your messenger had departed. What I have now in my hand is not your medicine!"

Lady Mandeville was too much shocked to reply for several moments; and every eye was silently bent upon the dust-soiled, but bold-featured and handsome speaker. A vivid blush had now succeeded to the pallor

which overspread his face when he had rushed into the room.

Little Henrietta threw her arms round her mother's neck, sobbing. Lady Mandeville, gently disengaging herself, after kissing the child, turned again towards Cuthbert, and said—

"Then you are Mr. Harding, my son Geoffrey's Eton friend? But where is Geoffrey?—and how, on earth, have you contrived to come so quickly? Geoffrey sent word that there were no horses procurable!"

Cuthbert had meanwhile gradually sunk into the chair on the back of which he was before leaning. He did not reply at first, although he was looking from Lady Mandeville to Henrietta, and had evidently heard these questions. The young girl flew towards him, and, taking his hand, with her head averted towards Lady Mandeville—

"Don't you see, mamma," she said, in

her quick, plaintive manner, "the gentleman is ill? There is blood on his forehead!"

"No—pardon me!" said Cuthbert, rising, and bending a sudden glance of grateful interest upon the fair young speaker. "I am still a little out of breath—nothing more."

Henrietta withdrew her hand shyly, and stole back to her mother's side; and at this instant, happening to raise his eyes towards an immense pier glass, Cuthbert paused abruptly, with a look of extreme confusion. Till then he had been unconscious of the wild aspect which he presented. He saw his forehead streaked with blood, his bare throat, his black neckerchief tied round his waist, and dust all over his person. This dust, which was white everywhere else, had assumed a sooty aspect upon his brow, cheeks, and neck, where it meandered with an effect perfectly horrible to behold, giving him the character of some painted warrior chieftain in a Red Indian tribe.

"I am not," stammered he—"I am not exactly fit to be in the presence of ladies. You ask where Geoffrey is: Geoffrey is coming in the chaise. Forgive me, Lady Mandeville. My motive must plead my excuse for appearing before you in such a guise."

"Both your motive and your success make you most welcome, I am sure," replied she. "You have preserved my life, and by some desperate exertion, as I conjecture. But I must postpone the gratification of my curiosity until you have refreshed yourself and are rested. Markham show Mr. Harding to his room."

Cuthbert bowed low and followed the servant.

"What a providential preservation, dear Lady Mandeville!—what a curious circumstance, and what an extraordinary first visit your son's Eton friend has made to Mandeville Park!" said the Marchioness of Solent.

"Who is he? His air is not a little striking!"

"Striking!" cried Mrs. Finchley. "I thought he would have struck Lady Mandeville. I am glad he had the grace to apologise for appearing such a guy. Were you not frightened, dear Lady Mandeville? I am sure I was; but, then, my nerves are so delicate."

"His father is one of Sir Walter's most influential constituents," said Lady Mandeville, addressing the marchioness—"Mr. Harding, of Lea Meadows, some ten miles from here. He became great friends with Geoffrey at Eton. It is, I believe, some old Saxon race, but poor. They always used to rank with the gentlemen of the county, I am told, until the present Mr. Harding, anxious to increase his means, went into trade."

We leave the ladies thus discussing the subject.

Meanwhile, Cuthbert followed the groom of the chambers through the great vestibule already described. His sudden and strange task was accomplished. His mind was now free. He paused and looked around and above. Many a tint fell upon the head and shoulders of the servant who preceded him. He sought their origin. The stained and storied Gothic windows; the moresque torch bearers; the conflict of the ordinary light which these dispensed with the coloured light of evening, filtered through the lofty casements; the suits of old armour; the armed and pedestalled figures of another age; the statues, the busts, and the paintings (of which some large and noble specimens adorned the walls of this immense vestibule); the palatial double staircase of polished and slippery oak, supported by massive balusters of the same wood, elaborately carved—the whole scene, with its thousand silently combined effects, produced a powerful impression

upon an eye which had never beheld anything similar, but which nature had well formed to appreciate, upon this first opportunity, the aggregate result. The scutcheon, the crest, the motto of the Mandevilles, met his glance everywhere. Borne as if upon the wings of the blast through the domain, a vague and bewildering sense of its beauty and grandeur had, nevertheless, settled upon his senses, though, while still in the saddle, it had not arrested his consciousness. Like a question or a remark which is addressed to us when absorbed in thought, and which we are not ourselves aware of hearing at the moment, but which we presently reply to, perhaps after the questioner is gone—like such a question or remark, the external spectacle of Mandeville Park now rushed back and mingled, in the awakened and observant mind, with the impressions which he received as he followed Markham. He had not noticed the drawing-room while in

it. He looked back. The door was closed. Through it seemed to come a vision of the stately scene behind, with its air of, till then, unwitnessed refinement and splendour. All this occurred in a second. He sighed, compressed his lips, and raised a hand to his forehead. He felt confused, however, as he observed that the servant was looking round.

"Have you dined, sir?"

"Yes, at Huntingferry. So has Mr. Geoffrey. But I should like a biscuit and some wine after I have washed and dressed," thrusting a hand through his hair.

"Would you like a bath, sir?"

"Yes; and I will stay in it till the chaise comes with my clothes. And, Markham (I think I heard you called Markham), give orders that the horse be carefully looked to. I will come round and see him after my bath. Can you tell me whose horse this is to be?"

The servant stared.

"I thought, perhaps, he might be yours," he said. "Do you mean the horse you rode, sir?"

"No; you could not have heard anything about him. Mr. Childering has sold him, I understand."

"Oh, sir,—if that be the horse, I do happen to know, for I heard the gentleman say—in short, sir, the gentleman is dining here now, with other company. It is Mr. Bradworth."

But Cuthbert had asked without caring for the answer, merely because, as he imagined, he had seen the servant watching the effect produced upon his mind by the unwonted magnificence around him. The man was too much used to that magnificence, and too little acquainted with the youth's character or circumstances, to have entertained any such thoughts. Cuthbert's ear was caught by a word which the servant had used.

"Is there a dinner party?" he asked. "You speak of company!"

"Sir Walter entertains a few friends, sir; the Marquis of Solent and Mr. Bradworth are here, sir."

"*And* Mr. Bradworth!" said Cuthbert. "Well, when Mr. Geoffrey arrives, let him know that I shall not come down till I see him."

CHAPTER V.

"Oh! Time! the beautifier of the dead!
Adorner of the ruin!"

BYRON.

THE noise of a footman entering the neighbouring bedchamber, and arranging some luggage, roused Cuthbert, while still in the bath. He called out to the man and asked whether the chaise had not come.

The servant appeared in the doorway.

"Yes, sir; and Mr. Geoffrey and the chemist. Mr. Geoffrey is now in the drawing-room, with my lady and the company. Mr. Geoffrey asked, was you in time, sir? And then he ran through the staircase hall, but he turned, and bade me say, that he

would come directly he had told everything to everybody, sir; and what you have done, sir? When Mr. Geoffrey was told you wasn't killed, sir, nor my lady was not dying, he hoped you would soon be dressed, and that he would come here directly with Sir Walter. I have placed some wine, with grapes, and some biscuits on the table, in the next room, sir. Markham told me——"

"Yes, very well. Bring me the smaller portmanteau here," called out Cuthbert.

The servant did so, and then retired. Cuthbert was soon dressed; and, surveying himself in a cheval glass, which stood back upon its proper inclined plane, beneath two wax lights, attached to it in projecting sconces, he was agreeably saluted by the marvellous change in his appearance. The exertion he had undergone, the suspense attending it, which had called all his faculties into such wonderful action as they never before had known, the complete success he

had achieved when no one else had seemed capable of even thinking with precision or with clearness — and, above all, the vital nature of the service it had thus fallen to his lot to render to a great family—combined to give an animation, a dignity, and even a nobleness, to a person which was naturally elegant, to a face which was handsome in all, save the expression, and to an air eminently bold, gallant, and engaging. He stood for a moment before the mirror, and said, with a smile—

"Ah! I see that I am a man. This morning I was only a schoolboy."

Then, suddenly, a dark, cold, and wary look stole like a cloud over the momentary radiance which had illumined his face. He glanced musingly around the walls, which, even in this bath room, presented everywhere the tokens of a union between wealth, personal refinement, and hereditary honours.

"Good Heavens!" thought he, as he threw himself into a chair. "What a difference! What a contrast! Yes, yes; he need not have said to me, 'You know I am much richer than you.' He need not have insisted on paying my bill at the Frederick and Pigtail. Confound his impertinence! But he never meant it. No, it comes to him naturally. Heir to this place! Ah! it is not merely that he is richer. And what am I? Certainly, between Mandeville Park and Lea Meadows, the gulph is deep. But, between Geoffrey Mandeville and Cuthbert Harding, what is the difference? Is it not just as great? What can he do that I cannot do better? Nothing; and there are fifty things I can do that he could not attempt. I am not so big, and yet I thrashed Jermyn, who had thrashed Geoffrey. When it came to reading, I could always take my place among those in whose rank Geoffrey was never found. But what

could reading do for poor Tom Falconer? He soon found the value of it when he went to Hazlebury. I might have read, but what then? I thought money was the thing. Clear, it gave a fellow a great swing. Geoffrey always had lots of pocket money; it was hard to see the position one got by spending it; for, after all, it is not the having—it is the spending. Well! I found out how to make a book. That pulled me up the leeway, until this last year. Then, in the debates, again, I succeeded; and Geoffrey could never open his lips, without making himself absurd. Everything after this, and after my *bookkeeping*, ha! ha! went well, till this last year. Somehow, positions seemed to change then. Fellows began to think what each fellow was to be, immediately after leaving Eton. Strange how quickly the nobodies found out who the somebodies that had been nobodies were! And I, who had been somebody, became

nobody very soon. Some of the fellows had letters from home, I know, telling them whom to make up to. A mean, toadying set, with toadies for fathers and mothers to teach them! I am sure the mothers told some of the set which would be the right acquaintance. I remember how that lout, Wickham, became quite important all of a sudden, when he announced to us, with his cursed stutter, that he was 'go-go-going to spend the vacation at the Duke of Man's.' Confounded impertinence! At the same time, Geoffrey began to be a fellow of high consequence, though I'll do him justice, he never changed a bit himself. But those around us did, and what a difference it seemed to make when it was known that I was to come here with Geoffrey—that I was to be introduced to his mother and to Sir Walter—that I was to spend some days with them. Spend some days? What does that signify? He is to spend all the days he pleases here, and not

as a guest. He is my taper, and I looked bright with his rays, because I was by his side. Great honour, to be sure! Who and what, then, are we two? Wherefore are we so unequal? Unequal, true enough. I don't know one thing in which he can pretend to equal me. But where's the use of my superiority? Why, the very last year, after I had taken the lead of him in every mortal kind of trial—from books, while I cared for them, to the boat on the river—he comes suddenly out upon us as heir of Sir Walter Mandeville, of Mandeville Park. Heir! That's part of him, I suppose! But he did not make his father, and I cannot make mine. What merit is it of Geoffrey's that he has an ancestor, called Sir Joceline, who went to the Crusades six hundred years ago? Did Geoffrey send him? Is all this fair? Good Heavens! to think that such a circumstance should make this manifest difference in the present year

between Geoffrey and me as we leave Eton! And he talks of driving me over from such a place as this to Lea Meadows! I suppose he'll propose next that some of the ladies shall come with us, to show them *our* mansion, *our* park, my father, the brewer's towers, and stained glass windows, and armorial bearings forsooth, with our crest stuck up everywhere like his, as if there was nothing else in the world, no other object in nature!"

He took a turn up and down the exquisite little bath-room, and halted, with folded arms, at the Gothic window, from which he drew back the curtain, and raised the blind. Outside ran an esplanade, separated from the park by an ornamental, open-worked, and battlemented wall, with, beyond it, a mimic moat, and on the hither side, a terraced gravel walk. At the left of the esplanade, a corner of the garden hedge, composed of rosetree and sweetbrier, and

pierced with arched and bowery doorways, peeped round and was just visible. On the opposite side, "dark as a wolf's mouth," yawned the shadowy jaws of a wood, through which the back avenue retired. Here, seeming to lean like a wounded and weary giant among the trees, stood the broken and ivy-covered tower of a ruin, part of the ancient feudal castle. Over it shone the summer moon. The battlemented wall which we have mentioned supported, perching or crouching at intervals, immense griffins, dragons, and other heraldic images, each clutching in its talons, or in its paws, the shield of the Mandevilles, which was thus upheld vertically, with its face towards the windows.

"Ugh!" exclaimed Cuthbert, "those monsters in stone seem to grin and mow at me!"

Thus muttering, he turned back into the room. Then, wondering what delayed his

friend, he sat down, took out his pocket-book, and examined again the memoranda of his bets on the recent race.

"Fifty pounds grown into a hundred and twenty-five!" he pursued, mentally. "Well, money is no use!—it won't buy a dead Sir Joceline of the thirteenth century. I thought it was all in all. But this place, certainly, is not made out of mere money. Still I shall be able to make some nice presents to my mother and my sister. Why did my father become a brewer? We are of an old Saxon stock, too. But, then, without any of the enjoyments of life, or any of these means of reminding people of their race—in short, without a grand expenditure—there is nothing in it. I dare say, my father was quite right. I know who was not right, though: Uncle Marlowe, the parson. What fudge about my being the gentleman of the family!—about taking care there should be one gentleman, at least,

in the family, and sending me to Eton, at his own expense, and all that! Very good of Uncle Marlowe; and I wish now I had read, just to please him. But what advantage would it have been to me? Gentleman, indeed!—what's a gentleman? Does Uncle Marlowe know this place? Why, now I think of it, he does know it; and he's a very clever man, too! Perhaps it is true. I'll see and judge for myself. I'll see what it really is that gives people consideration in this world. Is it talent? Well, I've heard my father say that he has known fifty astonishingly clever fellows, his own contemporaries, who lived in scorn and died in beggary. I wonder if any very rich man ever lived in scorn? As to the dying, that, at least, would be different. But I can't believe that mere riches would ever stand the presence of this place. I should like to see it tried. I should like to see

some bloated, vulgar, purse-proud, illiterate capitalist come here, and watch what position he took, what effect he produced, and what effect was produced on himself!"

CHAPTER VI.

"Upon their shields of solid ore,
And on their helm, the graver's toil had wrought
Its subtlety in rich device."

SOTHEBY'S *Saul.*

"Mammon led them on,
Mammon, the least erected spirit that fell."

Paradise Lost.

CUTHBERT again reverted to his winnings, which at Huntingferry had appeared to him so large, and had now dwindled, in his imagination, to such an inconsiderable sum; and he was revolving what gifts he had better procure with this money to offer to his mother and sister, when he heard a rapid footstep in the adjoining apartment, and Geoffrey burst into the room. A tear stood

in his eyes as he seized both Cuthbert's hands, and wrung them with generous fervour, exclaiming—

"My dear, dear Cuthbert! how can I ever thank you as you deserve? How can any of us ever thank you as you deserve? You have saved my mother's life, and saved it at the risk of your own. I shall never forget this day. We always were friends," added the warm-hearted youth, "but I now feel that I love you as a brother."

"Oh!" said Cuthbert, reddening and cordially returning his friend's grasp, "don't speak of it. A happy thought happened to occur to us just at the critical moment, and it has served its turn, that's all. I am more delighted than I can say that I should have been so lucky. Do you know, Geoffrey, I felt quite overpowered for the first time only when all was done. As soon as I had got good firm hold of the cursed phial—as soon as I had fairly snatched it out of your

mother's hand—it was as if I had swallowed its contents myself. Till then, all was distinct. I saw what I had to do. I saw your mother the moment I entered the room; I should have known her instinctively, even if she had not been holding in her hand the fatal bottle. But the instant all was safe, the room seemed to swim round me. Lady Mandeville sat before me in a mist of many tints, like one of the figures in the stained window behind her; a confused medley of persons seemed fading away on every side; I could make out nothing clearly; when suddenly the beautiful vision, as it seemed, of a young angel stood between me and the light, which so surrounded her form that I did not know where the one began and the other ended; I felt my hand taken, and I heard a sweet voice say—'the gentleman is ill, mamma,' or something to that effect."

"Ah!" returned Geoffrey, smiling, "that

was Henrietta, my little sister. She's all in love with you—being ten years old, you know. And, by-the-by, what is that she says about your being wounded in the head? I should think she has been reading lately some Middle Ages romance, which never lets off a gallant rescuing knight without a wound, only that I do now remember, as you overtook us and flew by the chaise, something like blood seemed on your forehead. But you were come and you were gone in a second. I do hope you are not hurt."

And Geoffrey, with eager solicitude, began to examine Cuthbert's forehead. The latter pushed the friendly hand away, laughingly.

"It is only a scratch," he said. "I suppose, before I passed you, being obliged to keep the side of the road, where, as you will remember, the trees overhung it very low, I must have brushed my head against the twigs. I did not feel it. All I know is,

that I lost my hat, which was knocked off in that place. But how long you have been, Geoffrey! I thought you would never come."

"Well," said Geoffrey, "I perceive there is some wine in the next room. Before we go down, we'll take a glass together. I am sure you require it. And, for my part, I have gone through more than an hour of such anxiety as will make it acceptable to myself. Hearing that you were in the bath, or were dressing, I went, and have also dressed, you see. So we have nothing to detain us, except that, just while I drink your welcome under this roof, I will explain to you why I was so long. It will be better than joining my father's circle so late in the dining-room, especially as you know none of them yet, and it would break their political conversation." The two young men accordingly repaired to the neighbouring room, where, near a broad casement in the tower,

a table was drawn; a couple of arm chairs stood in each corner, within the recess of the window. On a round table, in the centre of the apartment, two wax lights were set. The door of this room was closed, and the window was still unshuttered and uncurtained. Here, half turned towards the room, and half towards a lovely view which, from this lofty chamber in the great tower, unrolled itself for miles beneath them in the moonlight, the friends took their station. When each had filled his glass, and helped himself to some grapes, Geoffrey said—

"Well, you must know that if I have been long in getting away, it is because I had to satisfy ten thousand questions about you. But I could tell only part of the story. I knew not what had occurred at Huntingferry after I left that place myself on the chaise box. I only knew that you must have had no very easy work to get upon this horse of Childering's. I did not even

know how you got at him; for I remembered, as we drove along, that the innkeeper had told us the stable door was locked. You are a perfect hero in the drawing-room, and among the gentlemen, too. It was nothing but a series of exclamations in your praise. 'What courage!' cried my mother; 'and what presence of mind, to think beforehand of the smith!' said my father."

"How could he know anything about the smith?" inquired Cuthbert. "That occurred after you had driven off!"

"Yes; but it seems you had hardly got the horse away, when its master, Mr. Childering, arrived at the inn, with a chaise and pair. Learning what had occurred, he posted on here immediately, for three reasons. First, as he said, to relieve his anxiety about my mother's fate; secondly, because, although he could not come to dinner, he was engaged here beforehand to meet Mr. Bradworth, to whom he had sold this very

animal; and, thirdly, because he expected to find you dead, or dying, on the road, and he meant to pick you up."

"Oh! depend upon it," interposed Cuthbert, "there was a fourth reason, too. He was anxious to pick up the horse. That belonged to him, you know, and I do not. If I was killed, he lost nothing; if the horse was killed, he lost a couple of hundred guineas, or so—perhaps twice the sum."

"You are a fellow-creature, and Childering is a Christian," remonstrated Geoffrey, sipping his wine, like one who enjoyed it.

"No matter; a man may be a very good Christian to his horse, when it will fetch a heavy price.

"Well, be that as it may," pursued Geoffrey, "he came on, and arrived with his groom, about ten minutes after I had rushed, like a maniac, into the drawing-room; and as he had learnt from Parker, the innkeeper, and from his own servant, your Alexander

Macedon sort of battle with this new Bucephalus, he was able to supply my history exactly where it was deficient. He then went with me to the gentlemen, where he repeated the whole tale. My father, when he heard what had chanced, went out for a minute to see my mother, begging his male guests to excuse him, and to await his reappearance, for they were arranging the next campaign in the House of Commons. I went with him. Finding all was well, he returned, taking me still with him, but I soon broke away.

"You were the topic, I understand, among the men while my father was away; you were still the topic among them when he went back; and among the ladies, I verily believe nothing else has been mentioned ever since. In short, you are the lion, you are the hero."

"The dancing dog and the learned pig," added Cuthbert, smiling; "and, no doubt,

my fame has, at the same time, penetrated to the servants' hall and the stable yard, so that high and low will celebrate my achievements. I think I ought to have a ballad all to myself. There would be the malignant magician speeding on his errand of woe; the fair lady doomed to his despite; the trusty and true knight apprised of her danger, but unprovided with the means of transport; the friendly enchanter in the shape of a smith, and the winged horse on which he mounted the eager champion."

"Truly he did seem to have wings," returned Geoffrey, seriously. "Oh, Cuthbert! imagine the agony of my feelings, as I sat upon the box of that lumbering chaise. For the first half mile or more, I could not help—although the hill up which we drove barred all view beyond it—straining my eyes to try if I could see Saunders and the white pony. To be sure, he had got a perfectly hopeless start of us. But I stood

up all the same and continued my vain look out. When, however, we had reached the summit of that hill, and I beheld the long white stretch of the declivity, void of all objects as far as where it tapered to my hand's breadth—no Saunders, no Saunders anywhere,—I thought I should have gone mad! 'Faster, faster, you villain!' I shouted to the driver at my side, and the man stood up from his seat and lashed the horse for a whole minute together. But the poor brute was galloping already, such gallop as it was, and it was utterly unable to mend its pace. 'We'd better let him alone, sir,' said the driver, 'or we shall bust his heart, and have no horse to go on with.'

"Then my thoughts reverted to you, and I looked back. Now, again, in a contrary direction, the hill intercepted my view; and remembering, as I just now told you, what the innkeeper had said about Childering's

horse being locked up, and the groom absent with the key, I felt quite cold. A chill of horror and despair crept down my back. I fancied Saunders already arrived; I fancied that I actually saw my mother expiring. Then I thought of the time; I looked at my watch; I perceived that the pony could not yet have reached his journey's end. But, not to weary you with all the agonies of terror and doubt through which I passed, oh! Cuthbert, conceive my delight when, on turning round again, I beheld in the distance the mighty chestnut horse! I told the driver to pull to the left of the road. Scarcely had we thus made room, when, far as you had seemed, we felt the wind of your rush, and saw you already vanishing along the road before us! Half my anxiety was over; but now the remaining half was more acute and more intense—I mean, whether you could possibly overtake Saunders!"

"In truth," said Cuthbert, "I failed in

that, and it was the narrowest and nicest hit of time that can easily be conceived. I had literally not three seconds to spare. The man at the lodge, most fortunately, was talking lazily to some person—a gamekeeper, he looked—as I came up, and he had not yet closed the gate again, which he had opened just before to let my chace through. As I burst past him, upon the lawn I saw the white pony being led round the house to the stables. I believe I uttered some cry which Childering's noble horse—I wish he were mine—seemed to understand; for I felt myself heaved upwards and onwards as if upon a wave at sea; he appeared to devour the whole intervening lawn, and my very breath was taken away by his last tremendous rush. Saunders himself, halted, turned, and met me to catch the reins, as I flung myself off at the door."

Geoffrey here seized Cuthbert's hand again, and wrung it silently.

"Another glass, Cuthbert," he then said, "and we will go down."

"Oh, by-the-by," said Cuthbert, helping himself as he was desired, "I want you to tell me one thing. I understood, from one of the servants, that the Marquis of Solent and Mr. Bradworth are dining here. Now, who is Mr. Bradworth?"

"Who?" answered Geoffrey, stupidly. "He's—he's Mr. Bradworth."

"True—so I conjectured, my dear fellow. But, unless I am deceived by something, by the servant's tone, he must be a man of very high consideration indeed; scarcely second to Lord Solent, I should say."

"Oh, I believe, very high consideration, indeed," replied Geoffrey, with a perplexed look; "he's the great Mr. Bradworth, you know."

"No, I don't. Great in what?"

"Ah! that I can't tell you. I never saw him till just now, in the dining-hall."

"Is he a member of the House of Commons?"

"Certainly. He's member for Suds, or for Soap, or some place like that."

"Then, perhaps, he is a great orator? Though how can that be? Everybody would know it, and would know his speeches, too—like Mr. Melcombe's, for instance."

"Lord! he's not like Melcombe, Cuthbert. You never saw such a man."

"What is he like?"

"Like a porpoise, as much as anything I know."

"Doubtless he is a very learned person?"

"Can't say, but should think not. He is something about railways."

"Then, of course, he is an inventor—a second Watt?"

"No, he's not a Watt, I'm sure, nor an inventor. But he's—he's the great Mr. Bradworth, I know."

"Your father respects him very much, doesn't he? And your father is a judge of who should be respected, if any man is."

"Well, as to that, I never heard my father speak of him. My father's position in the political world obliges him to be civil to all sorts of people. But——"

"But what?"

"Why, Lord Solent, at least, has the highest opinion of Mr. Bradworth. I could see it in his manner, even while I was in the room. All I know, however, is that he is a man of the greatest importance."

"I see I can get nothing out of your information; and now I am ready to go whenever you like. But stay; you have never heard me philosophise, and I will give you a bit of my philosophy. This is clearly some very eminent and illustrious man. Now, men are illustrious in three ways: in word, in action, and in thought. Any re-

spect paid to them for any other cause must be hypocritical and self-interested. But, hang it! I'll not continue—'tis out of my line. Shall we go?"

Geoffrey assented, and, taking one of the wax lights, led the way. Descending a spiral staircase, they passed through two or three long corridors into a broader and very handsome gallery, on each side of which were several doors. Opening another at the end, a buzz of voices was heard, though the speakers were invisible, and, to judge by the sound, at some great depth below. Geoffrey turned, and placed his finger upon his lip.

"They have not left the dinner table," he said; and he explained to Cuthbert that the place where they now stood was the music loft of the dining hall. Leaning over the massive balustrade, they could both see and hear the guests—themselves unobserved. A coarse, loud voice at that moment suc-

ceeded to the low and indistinct murmur of many. All the other gentlemen had apparently arrested their miscellaneous conversation to listen.

"Hush!" whispered Geoffrey.

The speaker below, as Cuthbert could perceive, was a round-shouldered, thick-fingered man, whose hands were clenched on the table before him. He had a diamond ring and a ruby face.

"Hadam Smith, Sir Walter! Wot's he got to do with it? That's all my heye—'appiness of the greatest number! The greatest number can take care of themselves. The thing to know is wot thing to go into, and when to come out. The South Central scrip will be at fifty per cent. premium before the month's up. 'Appiness! wot's 'appiness? Some says dividends, and some says premiums at the sellin' time. But I don't go into that. I don't want to. The South Central is the thing I went into last, and

I'll not come out of it till every fifty pun' share is a two hundred pun' bargain."

"Understand me," said Sir Walter. "I don't question for a moment what you say, I am sure, for there is no better authority than yourself that the South Central will realize, under your auspices, the immense profits you predict. But, as I happen to know the proposed line well, and as there is no physical possibility, either along its course, or at the two points which it is to connect, of any adequate paying traffic for the next half century, it is perfectly evident that the line itself will be abandoned speedily, and will therefore entail ruinous loss on the last purchasers of the shares. Had I been on the committee, I would never have consented to let this private bill pass."

"But I ain't talking of hultimate purchasers," replied the other. "I take the thing as I find it. I didn't go into it till I knew the bill was safe to pass. I'm talking

of himmediate purchasers, to sell again by-and-by."

"Sir Walter," remarked Mr. Melcombe, "is right as to the principle, and——"

"The principal, fiddledeedee! We don't want the principal from the first shareholders. Wot *they* do is to pay the deposit."

"I mean the moral principle."

"If you come to that, wot is morals?" said the other. "Morals is a book. Morals isn't a fortune. Is fifty per cent. in market overt a bad moral principle to go upon, I should like to know? I'll trouble you for some strawberries, my lord."

Here Cuthbert turned round, and saw Geoffrey very red in the face, and stuffing his mouth with his pocket handkerchief to prevent an open burst of laughter.

"Who is that animal, Geoffrey?"

"Now you can judge for yourself. That's the great Mr. Bradworth."

As they were descending the stairs, which,

after passing through a lobby, led down into the great vestibule, Cuthbert glanced round the scene.

"Has Mr. Bradworth got a country place like this, with his crest all about?" he asked, after a pause.

"No, but I'll tell you what he has; he has half a million of money!"

CHAPTER VII.

"Fixed on their end, with caution they proceed,
And sometimes give and sometimes take the lead."
CRABBE.

THE desperate ride, which it took only a few minutes (some quarter of an hour) to accomplish, was destined to be remembered and talked of in that county for many a year.

Next morning, Cuthbert rose early, and, lighting a most injurious cigar (so the wise have told me of a cigar smoked before breakfast), sauntered forth into the Park, while still the house was quiet, to indulge in various tobacco-shaded reflections, undisturbed by the importunity of friendship.

Who can say what were those reflections? "Never mind reflections," thinks the reader —"you just go on with your story; tell us what happened, as you hitherto have told it; the incidents and facts and whole outside picture of the things—these are our object."

I will obey; but I am so docile only because I have no choice. Were it possible for me to lift the veil from the hearts of all my characters in a more direct manner than by relating what befel them, what they did, and what they suffered, how much more enthrallingly interesting than any tale of the mere result—the external, material consequences—would be that strange and wondrous spectacle! All the stories of all the lives on earth are first traced up to a certain mysterious chapter (where the writing ceases or changes), on that inner book, the heart and brain of man. What we do depends, and always depends, on what we think and feel; and on what we do, in its

turn, depends our destiny up to a certain point. For, look you, Providence, knowing also what all other persons will do, and even arranging the instruments of inanimate nature around us, so as to favour the success of some attempts, and to insure the failure of others, meets us at that point (the point of which I speak, where the first hand-writing on that inner book ceases), and takes up the remainder of the tale in characters of its own, not to be deciphered, save by the light of the result. That ulterior, undecipherable chapter is each person's future. Attempts, then, alone are left to us; the issues are beyond our mastery. Yet, every act (and acts are all only the growth of some feeling, some thought), every act has its consequence; and, what is more, there is not an individual who reads these lines, nor an individual on earth, who has not, up to a given point, as I have said, his destiny in his own hands; he

cannot command the shape of it, but he can command its quality. That is, he can make it good, or he can make it bad; but what infinite details of form, what endless alternatives of external circumstance that destiny may clothe itself in (being still either the good or the bad thing he has made it), this neither you nor I can tell.

> "There is a Providence that shapes our ends,
> Rough hew them as we may."

But Cuthbert's cigar is out, and I must suppress some very profound conclusion to which I was coming. Cuthbert's cigar is out, so are the cloudy wreaths of his intricate and fantastic calculations; and pale and fatigued, like one who had taken violent bodily exercise, although in truth he had been lying under a sycamore tree, he was slowly returning through the pleached alleys and statued terraces of the garden, when he observed the slight form and delicate face of little Henrietta, who was gather-

ing flowers on the rich and sheltered lower table ground, or esplanade.

As soon as she caught sight of him, she ran forward, the morning sunlight seeming to glance and stream from her shoulders in a cascade of molten topazes.

"She is a sweet child," thought Cuthbert; "but never will she be so beautiful as Emily Whitsund, to whom I am engaged."

"Mr. Cuthbert, Mr. Cuthbert, where have you been? You naughty Mr. Cuthbert, I have news for you!"

"Pray tell me them."

"Them? what?"

"The news."

"Oh dear! when I was in my grammar the other day, Miss Haxton said 'news' was singular."

"Very likely," said Cuthbert; "just as good, no doubt; or perhaps I was even wrong altogether. But what is the news then? "Is it singular? Above all, is it *strange*?"

"No. Come, you are an Etonian! Eton is far above Miss Haxton."

"True, but every Etonian is not Eton. Meanwhile, if I be not impertinent, your last remark makes me very curious to know your age."

"My age! I am eleven. But you are not by any means to go to-day; at least, you cannot go this morning! and I am so glad!"

"Thanks to you for being so glad, but why can I not go? I rather fear I must."

"Oh! I could tell you such a pretty story about *Must* and *Cannot;* they were two kings, and they went to war! Miss Haxton told me all about their great battle. But say you *will* not go."

"Ahem!" said Cuthbert, reddening and shading his eyes for a moment; "you are very kind to wish me to stay—and I *will* stay till evening, to please you. But which of those two mighty kings of whom you speak, won the battle?—*Must* or *Cannot?*"

"Oh! *Must* won in the end, but with great loss; and then a very powerful king, indeed, his neighbour, sent to offer him friendship and alliance. That other king was called *Will*. When he and *Must* are friends, nothing can resist them; but *Will* often forgets this, and wastes half his kingdom in wild and foolish undertakings, where he gets taken prisoner."

Cuthbert's gaze wandered, and when he fixed it again on Henrietta, he was evidently pursuing his own train of thought, and had not paid servile attention to her prattling explanations. She suddenly perceived his abstraction, and a sort of angry blush or glow incarnadined the oval symmetry of her pallid cheeks. Cuthbert, in his turn, noticed the altered expression of the beauteous young fairy, who had suddenly ceased speaking.

"Something annoys you?" said he.

"Yes; you do."

"How? Why? What have I done? When?"

"Algernon listens to me, and talks to me again. *You* don't think it worth while. I'll tell *him* all my stories."

"Forgive me," said Cuthbert; "it was only for an instant. I was thinking of my sister, who is not well."

"Why!" cried Henrietta; "you have not worse news of her, have you, since being here?"

"No."

"Then Geoffrey said, you know, that, according to the news received by you, she was much better than she had been. Don't be frightened; she will be quite well when you get home. See! I had plucked these flowers, for fear you might be obstinate, that you might, in that case, take them to little Winnifrid, with my love. But you are to stay till evening, and I'll get you a fresher bouquet this afternoon."

"A thousand thanks! Winnifrid will love you very much. But who is Algernon, to whom you say you will tell your story of *Must* and *Cannot?*"

"Algernon is Algernon Childering. He says such delightful things. I always long for Algy to come, and I feel so, *so* sad when he goes away."

"How old is he?"

"I don't know. Not so old as you, I think. But you don't talk as he does."

"How? So much?"

"No—so beautifully; and when he is in a different humour, he says such funny jokes!"

"Ahem!—and so you'll tell *him* the story?"

"No—I will not tell him *that* story; for do you know," added she, lowering her voice with a sort of awe, "I thought all stories were in story books; and when Miss Haxton had read me this, I saw it was a

paper of writing, and she told me that Algy had written it expressly for me!"

"What! He had written it?—that is, written it out? You do not mean that he composed it?"

"Yes, he did! and every one says he is so clever. It was kind in Algy—was it not? He has such magnificent eyes, when he is talking eagerly to papa. Ah! you should see Algernon."

"Well—I have no chance, I perceive," said Cuthbert, smiling (but with far more of the reality of the jealousy which his words expressed, than he, in his pride, would have acknowledged). "I have no chance of your caring for me. Algernon Childering is everything with you."

"Not everything," said she, gently, and looking fixedly at Cuthbert. "He never saved mamma's life, and you have, dear Mr. Cuthbert. But——"

"But what?"

"Geoffrey says you rode so splendidly; but all he can tell us is just that: he says, 'splendid!' (here the little elf began to mimic her brother, in high good humour, and with the most marvellous reproduction of his voice, gestures, manner, and even look)—'splendid, by Jove! stunning, sir, stunning! Like a hundred thousand bricks!' That is all that Geoffrey says. Oh, I wish that Algy had seen you mount that horse, dear Mr. Cuthbert, and ride that terrible, terrible race! And if, in a room with many people, Geoffrey was going to tell what you had done, I wouldn't let him —but I would say, 'Let Algy tell it, Geoffrey.' Indeed I would—I would make Algy tell it! one never forgets what Algy says. I've heard papa say so, and mamma says the same, so does Miss Haxton."

"I don't think I'm likely to forget what you say, either," remarked Cuthbert; "you've picked up the knack from this son

of the gentleman whose horse I rode. I beg pardon—I mean, son of Mr. Childering, who lately owned the horse."

"Ah, but *you* have saved mamma's life. Whenever I look at mamma, or see a chestnut-coloured horse, or a thin, little flask of medicine, I shall think of you."

"And when will you think of this Algernon?"

"Oh—anything reminds me of him; it may be anything!"

"He ought to be glad," said Cuthbert—"you will think of him the oftenest."

"Perhaps so. But I must tell you the news, and then I must go in. I ought to have brought my hat. Geoffrey is to go to Oxford immediately, and to take honour; and before he goes he is to go to the Duke of Man's, and all his time will be taken up, and you may not have any more time to spend together for a long, long time."

"Ah! that is the news, is it?" said Cuthbert, musingly.

"There!" cried the little fairy, with a ringing laugh and a beaming countenance. "The news *is!*—you see it is singular, yourself!"

"Yes," said he, smiling sadly; "singular, but not strange!"

There was something about his expression which made the dear child pause suddenly in her laughter. She put away, with a toss of the head, the golden tresses which had fallen over her forehead, and fixed a long, inquisitive look upon Cuthbert.

"Why," she then asked, "do *you* not also go to Oxford, Mr. Cuthbert, and take honour?"

The boy hesitated.

"Because—because—I—I must begin to be busy in life;—busy in life; busy. 'King Must' you know, of whom you just now spoke, is a very despotic and powerful monarch."

As he said this, young Harding heaved a scarcely audible sigh. The child gazed at him wistfully; and, then, with right ready innocent sympathy, echoing the sigh, murmuringly and musingly replied—

"Yes, very powerful; very."

While they were thus conferring, Harding happened to look towards the window of the drawing-room which commanded a view of the garden, and he perceived at once the fruits of fame, and the profound and continued sensation created by his all daring and all achieving exploit of yesterday. Lady Mandeville and a group of ladies were at the window in the drawing-room. Lady Mandeville was in the very act of pointing with a book which she held in her hand towards Cuthbert, and was evidently speaking with animation; while behind the fair circle, and looking intently at him over their shoulders, stood the elder Mr. Childering, Mr. Melcombe, and Sir Walter. The

youth had evidently attained, for the moment at least, and in that brilliant mansion, to the "That is the man" of ancient Greek ambition, and the coveted "*Digito monstrari et dicier Hic est*" of Imperial Rome. Blushing scarlet, Cuthbert turned towards little Henrietta and said: "But it is time—it is time for you to go in, and I'll go too." And while he spoke, he moved slowly towards the house.

One of its Gothic façades, all creeping with devils, gryphons, dragons, and phantasmal horrors, in every variety of mediæval blazon, and crowned with its diadem of gilt minarets and twisted turrets, formed (beyond a broad gravel esplanade, which was everywhere else enclosed by a battlemented wall, but here by a thick hedge of sweetbrier and monthly roses, lining, as it were, a row of giant laurels) one of the Gothic façades or fronts. I say, formed, on this side, the boundary of the garden, and now rose be-

fore them in a wondrous richness of light and shadow, half of it gleaming in the slant rays of the morning sun, and half withdrawn into the blackness of the buttress-sheltered and figure-guarded hollows. In the house, under the porch of a wide folding door, which opened opposite to the lofty arch of the central passage, through the hedge of roses, stood a stout man, without his hat, his hands crossed, Napoleon-wise, behind his back. Henrietta, running on before, shot by this figure rather unceremoniously. Cuthbert, however, approached him very differently, and with far more observance, muttering: "There stands half a million of money!"

"Good morning, Mr. Bradworth," said Cuthbert, lifting his hat with a rather fine air, but speaking in a tone at once cordial, frank and respectful.

The figure contemplated him a moment with small, keen eyes, from over the purple cheeks.

"Ah! you're the chap that rode my 'orse yesterday?"

"Not then knowing him to be yours," answered Cuthbert. "Had heard, indeed, at the inn, that he was sold to some person of distinction, but the name was not given."

Mr. Bradworth's countenance brightened at once at the phrase which Cuthbert had so adroitly thrown in, "some person of distinction."

"It was a fortunate ride for me," continued Cuthbert, observing his advantage, "since it has procured me"—another slight bow here, and the hat again raised with a certain off-hand, though grand air—"the privilege of your acquaintance."

"Your 'eadpiece seems screwed on in the right place," observed Mr. Bradworth. "You'll do—you'll do!"

"Have you bought that fine horse for your own private riding, sir?" inquired

Cuthbert, who reddened at being detected in his flattery, "for I don't think he is fully broken; and, pardon my forwardness, it will be much more comfortable for you to put him in hand again for at least three months, when you return to London."

"Thank you for the good intention," returned the Half Million, with a knowing smile and a twinkling eye. "I'm not agoing to get upon that 'orse. He's for sale. I should like you to 'ave 'ad 'im; but you couldn't apaid the price—*you* couldn't!"

"Purchaser found, sir?" pursued our youth, quietly.

"Yes; that Corsican or French Prince, who would ride anything—Prince Thingumbob. Yes, yes; the bargain was struck before I bought him myself. I had the brute up in London, to look at him, and to let another person look at him, and take opinions, before I paid the money to Mr. Childering."

"A good difference, I hope," said Cuthbert, "between the two prices?"

"Pretty well, pretty well!—I nett a couple of 'undred!"

"That is equivalent," pursued our youth, nearing his point, "to a couple of shares in the newly-projected railway, of which I heard you demonstrate the desirableness and necessity so clearly, last night, after dinner. How you crushed the arguments of poor Sir Walter and that other person!"

"What do *they* know about railways?" returned Mr. Bradworth. "Couple of shares! equivalent! Why that altogether depends. If you wanted to buy in now, it is two 'undred pun'; but when we've got our line through the committee, and when I've fairly jerked the ball out on the public, them shares 'll be worth twenty, perhaps fifty, premium, at the very least."

"And when will the line have passed the committee?" demanded Cuthbert.

"Next week, as I reckon."

Cuthbert mused a moment, and then, getting very red, and evidently making great efforts to preserve an air of composure, he said—

"I won a little money on the late races; and I should like of all things (if you would condescend so far) to place my contemptible trifle in your hands, Mr. Bradworth, and make a first investment under the wisdom of your kind advice."

"How much 'ave you got?"

"A hundred and twenty five pounds: it will entitle me to only one share. I am quite ashamed to occupy your attention with such a very trifling investment—and—and——"

"Well! 'tain't much of an investment, to be sure," answered the vapour monarch, with a scarcely audible sniggle; "but I say, they tell me you was at Eton? You must go it rather, you Etonians, to be able to nett

or to lose 'undreds in just pocket-money—eh?"

"If you saw my book," replied Cuthbert, "you would perceive that I did not, for an instant, risk as much as I afterwards won. The book's the man, sir! Not a soul of 'em knew anything about making one."

Mr. Bradworth noiselessly unclasped his arms from behind his back, and thrust two very red hands into his trousers; then throwing his head on "the off" shoulder, and jingling the silver which was in his pockets, he contemplated Cuthbert for nearly a minute with an expression of blended scrutiny and admiration. The ingenuous youth supported this ordeal with laudable coolness.

"*You'll* rather do," remarked Mr. Bradworth, at last. "The book's the man, is it? Hum! As to your 'undred and twenty-five entitlin' of you to only one share, you're mistaken. I'll tell you what I'll do; you

'and over your 'undred and twenty-five, and I'll give you, this moment, five shares to begin with. You've paid the deposit for five. But mind, you can't use the scrip till the line's passed the committee of the 'Ouse. The thing is sure, so we get our shares ready. There'll be no call before there's a rise, mark my words. When the rise comes to fifteen per cent., you sell at that 'ere premium, and nett seventy-five; and if there's a further rise, no matter, don't you regret; stick to that rule of prudential and safe gains. I wouldn't do such a thing for everybody; if it so chanced that a call did come, how could you pay up? But I like you, and I would pay for you, 'specially as there won't be any occasion. Still, knowing that you're not solvent, up to the nominal possible call, 'twouldn't be fair to give you more than one share, if I wasn't ready to stump up myself, and to fork down on theory; there won't be occasion, you know.

Here's the bits of paper. Take care of them. In ten days you just set them aflying, and put two 'undred in your pocket-book, instead of this 'ere 'undred and twenty-five."

Cuthbert took the scrip, which he carefully folded up and lodged in his pocket-book, in lieu of twelve different checks and orders (to the value of one hundred and twenty-five pounds), which he had received by post from various Etonians, losers of bets which they had made with him.

He had just finished his thanks to Mr. Bradworth, when a quick step in the vestibule behind them made both look round, and a servant said—

"Lady Mandeville has come down, gentlemen, and breakfast waits."

It was not a house in which breakfast waited everybody's caprice from eight o'clock in the morning till one in the afternoon, and where the disorder of a tavern was aggra-

vated by the far more reckless wastefulness of the ungrateful guests. Regularity of hours reigned in Mandeville Park, amidst all the splendours of its dress, appearance, and arrangements.

Mr. Bradworth and Cuthbert Harding moved with alacrity at the summons of the servant, and carried to the breakfast-room, the one the appetite which he had inhaled at the porch, the other that which he had obtained while pondering under the sycamore tree.

CHAPTER VIII.

"These shall the fury passions tear,
The vultures of the mind,
Disdainful anger, pallid fear,
And shame, that skulks behind.
Or pining love shall waste their youth,
Or jealousy, with rankling tooth,
That inly gnaws the secret heart.
And envy wan, and faded care,
Grim visaged, comfortless despair,
And sorrow's piercing dart."

GRAY.

AFTER breakfast, Geoffrey took Cuthbert to his room, and showed him the outfit which had been given him by his mother for Oxford. All was very fine, and nothing seemed to be wanting which could become the heir of Mandeville Park. Care had

been taken that his first entrance into the world of his equals, his appearance among the patrician youth of England, should carry with it all that could grace his own manly, healthful beauty, and the station of his family.

While Geoffrey was displaying the wonders of his complete dressing-box, silver-mounted, wherein he particularly bespoke admiration of that case of razors, which he had never yet had occasion to use, Cuthbert stood by, taciturn and thoughtful, glancing from each new bauble to his friend's exultant face, and then back again—taciturn, I say, and thoughtful. No young lady, exhibiting the finery provided for her approaching bridal, could have been more absorbed, abstracted, delighted, enraptured, than was Geoffrey. As over the dismal marsh, on some bleak wintry night, a star shining through the torn and ragged crevices of the misty clouds, casts a wan and haggard light

—so, a smile, dubious and feeble, and not easy to understand, illumined the countenance of young Harding while he watched his friend's gladness, and replied with "capital! charming! just the thing!" to his frequent, his reiterated question of "is it not stunning?" Sight-seeing is proverbially tiresome, even when you are not called upon to express, every moment, your unqualified admiration. At last, Cuthbert said—

"I've seen everything now, Geoffrey; and I must say your outfit is all you can desire. Let us go down."

"Ay, come to the stables; you have not seen everything yet. There's my father's present—a fine horse, well broken."

They repaired, therefore, to the stables, and there Cuthbert saw a horse, in the points of which he could indeed find no fault. He muttered to himself something which made Geoffrey say "what?"

"A sweet creature!" answered Cuthbert.

"I have not," he mentally added, "a horse in the world."

While considering the animal, he silently pursued this reflection a little further: "I can ride, and I have nothing to ride. This gentleman has the steed which would just suit me, and he suits it not. Besides, what will he do at Oxford? What might not I do? Reverse our positions, and all is in its place. Now we have a topsy-turvy arrangement. And whence the disorder? Merely from the uneven distribution of money. But money, thank goodness, can be won or spun. Money could not make a Mandeville Park, it is true, with all its dusty banners, Battle Abbey recollections, and Domesday-book origin; but have I not seen Mandeville Park itself, with all these banners and associations, bow down and worship Nicholas Bradworth? What did it worship in him? Would it have worshipped him twenty years ago, when he was a lean-faced shop-

boy behind a deal counter? Was it his mind or his manners, the wise books he has written for the enlightenment of posterity, the wise laws he has suggested in Parliament, the exploits he has performed, or any services whatever rendered to the common weal, or indeed rendered to others at all? Was it merit, or was it service, or was it personal fascination, that was thus idolised? No—it was half a million of money."

"A beautiful animal, indeed, Geoffrey!" he suddenly said, rousing himself from his abstraction; "what did he cost?"

"Don't know exactly, but I wouldn't take a hundred pounds for him."

After dinner, when the horses for the two friends were announced to be at the door, Henrietta ran across the room and offered Cuthbert a magnificent bouquet of flowers.

"Give these," said she, "to dear Winnifrid, with my love. Has she a nice garden of her own?"

"She has a garden," said Cuthbert. "But what a magnificent bouquet! I am sure Winny will be at a loss to thank you, as I am myself."

"See," cried Henrietta, "the moon is shining; I'll just muffle myself well—I'm sure mamma won't object—and I'll show you my garden. Come, Mr. Cuthbert; come, Geoffrey, it is so improved; come!"

Lady Mandeville shook her head, with a smile, and said, "Only for a moment, then, Henrietta."

The spoilt child laughed, while muffling a cloak around her, and then, hastily tying the strings of her bonnet, she darted out by the tall window door which communicated with the esplanade and garden, and through which the balmy and still warm air of a beautiful June evening stole into the apartment.

"Dear child," said Lady Mandeville, "it does not answer to contradict or restrain

her, as Dr. H. expressly said; but don't be long, Geoffrey; the dew has long begun to fall, and will soon fall very heavily."

"Look!" exclaimed Henrietta, when Cuthbert had followed with Geoffrey; "all this part, from the fountain as far as that statue, belongs to me! Papa says that I am to call it mine! He says, also, that I am to be constantly looking after and tending the flowers on fine days; he told me so immediately after the doctor had gone away one morning; you remember, Geoffrey, when I was so ill."

"Ah!" said Cuthbert, looking anxiously, and with a scrutinizing frown, at the child.

At this instant the weather suddenly began to change; a rack of misty clouds concealed the moon; some drops of rain fell, and a low plaintive-sounding wind arose.

"In, in, Henrietta!" cried her brother, seizing her hand, and making her run with

him towards the glass door, across the gravel esplanade.

Efforts were made to induce Cuthbert to "stay the night," as the phrase is, since the night promised to be so unpropitious. He would not, however, be retarded, even for five minutes, in his departure: merely begging on his side that Geoffrey would not think of accompanying him in such disagreeable weather.

They were soon trotting smartly along the plashy road, between the tall thick hedgerows, which, in certain counties, add so much to the beauty of the rural scenery—which helped, no doubt, of old, with other features, to give its name of "merrie Englande" to this country—and which, in the present day, excite to such a degree the splenetic disapprobation of all economists, as well as of all high farming agriculturists. A steep hill changed the pace; and, when the friends came to its foot, they

walked their horses. This permitted conversation.

"Is your little sister, Henrietta," asked Cuthbert, "threatened with consumption? You seemed to be peculiarly on your guard not to let her face the shower."

"Well, the doctor said, when he told her to work among the flowers, and all that, that it was much better she should not catch another severe cough. She does not now cough at all, and I think she is growing up strong. Consumption never was in my father's family. But mamma's mother died of it, and they say it leaps a generation, and so comes out again."

"Certainly you, Geoffrey, do not look a likely subject for it!" said Cuthbert. "Leaps a generation! How curious! Is that possible?"

"So I have heard," returned Geoffrey: "and, moreover, that such disorders are far more transmissible by the mother's, than by the father's side."

"Ah!" said Cuthbert—"and it was your mother's parent?"

"Yes—but dear Henrietta is growing up strong, I tell you; and ever stronger may she grow! To me her life makes a difference of forty thousand pounds lost; and right glad I am to think the dear little thing is breathing out of good lungs, even at that cost to me."

"How is that?—forty thousand pounds!"

"Why it is settled on her, man! But were she to die unmarried, it reverts to me, merging back into the bulk of the estate."

"Oh! I see," said Cuthbert, smelling at the large bouquet which he carried. "How the dew brings out the scent of flowers!"

Geoffrey glanced round, and exclaimed—

"Hey! old fellow, that bouquet won't reach its destination. It is sent to your sister Winnifrid, but I know one that will get it first."

"Who?"

"A certain young lady, now on a visit to your mother's. Why, man, your memory is short. Do you forget telling me at Eton all about Emily Whitsund? I've never breathed the subject till this moment, and never will, to any but yourself. However, I can't help often thinking of it. There is something romantic in possessing the love of a beautiful girl at your age or mine. I cannot boast as much. And why is she at your mother's just in this present nick of time?"

"Well, Geoffrey, you are being developed! You precipitate beautifully! I never thought you would come out as a *persifleur*."

"What's a *persifleur?*"

"A railer, a wit, a light lance of words, a free spear in jests upon a friend. You are wondrous! I confess the romantic passage, however. Emily Whitsund and I have exchanged vows of troth, under a hawthorn

hedge, in this month of June, one year ago. Yet the plighted word may never come to anything. Very often——"

Here Cuthbert interrupted himself, and glanced round uneasily. He fixed a long stare on a dreary moor which bordered the left of the road. Then he fell into a silent fit of abstraction.

Geoffrey glanced in the same direction, and seeing nothing to remark, reflected for a moment, after which, shaking off some thoughts too perplexing for solution, at least by him, he exclaimed in a cordial voice—

"Not come to anything! Oh, yes, it will, I am sure—all in good time. But pardon me, dear Cuthbert, has the lady any fortune?"

"Hark, Geoffrey!" said Harding, laying his hand nervously on his friend's bridle arm; "did you hear nothing?"

"Nothing, except the clatter of our

horses' hoofs, and the soughing of the wind in the trees."

"I heard a laugh, as if in scorn; at least, so I fancied," muttered Cuthbert; and then, without waiting for any comment upon this, he added, rapidly: "any fortune? Yes; Emmy Whitsund has a piece of land in Cumberland, which piece of land is hers altogether, and fetches her the enormous sum of ninety-five pounds per annum!"

"Well," observed Geoffrey, good-naturedly rather than profoundly, "never mind. Land is land all the world over—and love is love!"

"You speak like an oracle," replied Cuthbert, pulling his hat over his brows. "Pray, do you know one Algernon Childering?"

"I saw him once at the Park," said Geoffrey.

"What is he like?" inquired Harding, with a sort of vehemence.

"He is monstrous clever, I believe; but all I know is, that he is the nicest fellow that ever was."

"He has been a kind of playfellow of your sister's, I think—has he not?" pursued Cuthbert, his voice trembling very slightly.

Here an incident occurred which prevented Geoffrey's answer; and what Cuthbert or what Algernon might enact hereafter —what destiny Henrietta, what Emily Whitsund may yet encounter—these things, I say, remain a little while in shadow.

Young Mandeville, whose mind was running upon his outfit for Oxford, paid at first no attention to the question, and before he could collect his thoughts he was startled by an exclamation of his companion's.

CHAPTER IX.

"—— How sinks his soul!
What black despair, what horror, fills his heart!"
THOMSON.

THEY had ascended the hill of which we have spoken; they had descended it. A long, straight, and level road lay before them. On the right, some tall woods, forming the outskirts of Mandeville Park, and diversified by copse, occupied the scene. But, to the left, extended a damp and lonely heath, on the bosom of which, about a quarter of a mile from the road, shone, white and glassy, a pool of sedgy water. Cuthbert, during the latter part of the conversation detailed in our last chapter, had repeatedly glanced, with an uneasy and

hypochondriac air, over this desolate prospect. A misty moon, and a drizzling rain, shed down a species of woe upon the scene. Geoffrey, two or three times, looked round impatiently at his friend, when he found that a sentence was interrupted in the middle. On each occasion, he observed Cuthbert gazing with a wild, haggard, and even alarmed look upon the dreary and cheerless wold. He would then shake himself in the saddle, and with a manifest effort resume the conversation. But, ever and anon, the gaze would wander, and always to the left hand, always to the damp and lonely heath.

"What the deuce is the matter with him?" thought Geoffrey, but he did not put his thought into words. At last Cuthbert said—

"Geoffrey, does not the sight of that dismal plain, those gloomy swamps, with the misty, glassy pools of glistening water, strike a kind of awe into you?"

"Not a bit; in four months there will be capital wild duck shooting among those flashes, as they call them in the west. That is Heron Moss!"

"Flashes! And see, Geoffrey, there are some flashes of lightning! We shall be caught in a storm. I don't like the heath. I vote we gallop."

And, without waiting for assent or answer, he put his nag to its utmost pace, and never pulled bridle till some corn fields and farm yards glittered in the moonlight, on the left of the road.

"How strange!" thought Geoffrey, as he pursued his friend. Blunt and frank himself, he was not the person to leave such a mystery uninvestigated.

"Why what, in the name of all that's mad, possesses you, Cuthbert?" cried he, out of breath, when he had ridden up to his friend.

"How can I tell? Let us change the

subject. There are more wonderful things than a fit of hippish weakness. I was frightened, I believe!"

"You were frightened! I dared not have said so, and I know no more wonderful thing. But here you are, eh?"

"Yes," said Cuthbert, with a look of mortification which the darkness concealed from his friend: "yonder is Lea Meadows. It is very unlike Mandeville Park; it stands close upon the public road, as we Hardings stand close upon the great common and middle highway of life; we are not secluded among the enveloping woods and proud retirements of a lot at once aristocratic and opulent. You must count upon homely fare and an unpretending welcome, my dear Geoffrey, under this lowly roof."

There was a dignity beyond his years in Cuthbert's manner of saying this, only its effect was spoilt by a certain bitterness. Geoffrey felt himself awkward in not know-

ing exactly what to reply. The moon here shone out again, and Geoffrey looked up at it puzzled. He had neither the half supple and refining, half ardent and daring intelligence of Cuthbert, nor his morbid and irritable sensitiveness. He was an onward, straightforward, right-hearted English youth, not very bright in head, but bright in heart, in honour, in courage, and in truthfulness. Add to this, that he had the carelessness sometimes seen in the heirs of high station and of large estate. He had fallen into an absurd but natural and very common error, in which he was kept in countenance by the number of his companions—he was "too rich to be learned," too high placed to labour. To quote examples which would put this error to shame would be pedantic, because superfluous, although they are tempting in their picturesqueness, are these examples from Pericles to Cæsar, from Cæsar to the modern and even contemporary heroes

of many an imperishable story. And if it be foreign from my present task to deal with this error by citing the thousand glorious instances which disgrace and discountenance it, much more is it remote from my business to deal with it, by reasoning about it according to the strict rules of logic and discussion. One only example I will permit myself, that which is contained in the occurrences I have myself to relate.

But, short as are these digressive remarks, the reader has already, I think, perceived that they are too long for my taste. If with equal propriety I could have done so, I should have said at once, that Geoffrey was what his friends would term "a fine, open-hearted, simple fellow"—and his honest enemies, "an amiable and respectable young muff."

His lot was happy, his future was secure, his feelings were excellent, his ideas slow, his expressions just as might be. If they came when they were wanted, well and

good; if they did not, they still left him six feet high, full of health, handsomeness, and kindliness, as well as heir of Mandeville Park, with its nine thousand a year.

Meanwhile, there are now before us two ladies and two gentlemen, whose destinies, amidst the casual throng, justify our curiosity, and claim our inquiries. Little Henrietta is only in the bud, and belongs to the future. Emmy Whitsund, as we shall presently see, has blossomed into more immediate interest. Which is to be heroine of the doom? and which the queen of prosperous love? But, besides Cuthbert and our friend Geoffrey, there is yet a third youth who may demand notice. Cuthbert the reader begins to understand and to watch; but there is another, I repeat. Who and what is this Algernon Childering? Can Geoffrey tell us "which lover and which lady"? On these points there is hitherto only one fact clear. That young

Harding is a suitor of one Emily Whitsund —not yet introduced to the reader—and that an engagement subsists between them, is ascertained. But, without insisting on an occasional distinction between "suitor' and "lover," and without inquiring what young Harding will ultimately prove most inclined to love, or what tests his love will be capable of resisting, I need scarcely say that an exchange of plighted troth, made so very early in life, has its peculiar risks. The character of neither party is developed; and not on the character of either alone, but on that of both one and the other, even under favourable circumstances, depends the sequel.

For the last five minutes of the journey which I have described, Cuthbert had wholly ceased to be himself. Geoffrey was painfully conscious of a change of humour in him, which I find it difficult to describe. Had the mists of the solitary moor settled

upon him, and clung, so to speak, around his mind, there could not have been a greater gloom of manner, or a more chilly transition from the good spirits, if not geniality, with which he had previously supported his share in the conversation with young Mandeville.

Entering now a little palisade through a wicker gate, the two youths walked their horses along a gravelled way, bordered by a close mown miniature lawn, and leading to the porch of an old-fashioned, red tiled cottage. Through the central window of three, all of which rose nearly from ground to roof, in the nearest of the two cottage wings, separated as these were by the broad and far advancing porch, a continuous arrowy light was shot over the flowers of the little lawn, showing that the shutters of that window were not quite closed, and that the curtains were only partially drawn.

"How pretty," said Geoffrey. "What a

nice place Lea Meadows is! Hark!" he added, reining in his horse. "There's a voice for you!"

Cuthbert, recalled agreeably from his abstraction by his friend's flattering criticism and subsequent exclamation, halted also, and listened. A woman's voice, youthful, yet rich and mellow, penetrated the casement, and bore to them a sweet, strange air, the words of which were undistinguishable, but seemed to be foreign.

Young Harding had been delighted by Geoffrey's praise of Lea Meadows, as it appeared under the rallying beams of the summer moon; and, while he now listened to the ravishing strain of music which stole into the outer night, the dark mood seemed to be soothed within him, and his countenance cleared up, even like the sky above them. A powerful wind which prevailed in the upper regions of the atmosphere, but was not felt where they stood, had already

rescued the middle heavens from troops of clouds, which were chased and driven down the apparent declivity of the gemmed and luminous vault; while the moon, escaping from the ragged rout, shed floods of pallid, silvery light upon every object, casting almost vertical shadows from the tall figures of the two youths and of their horses, which pawed their own eluding images upon the darkened gravel, elsewhere gleaming with a white, metallic-looking sheen. The temporary disturbance of the weather had been but a "heat shower," as it is termed, and was passing away in distant rolls of thunder; the air was warm and full of electricity, and a few flashes of sheet lightning lit up with their lambent coruscations the skirts of the receding storm. Presently, as the friends still sate silent upon their horses, no other sounds save the melody of the enchanting song from the invisible vocalist broke the stillness. The instrument on which she

sparingly accompanied the foreign words of the sad, sweet air was evidently a guitar; and it seemed as if the singer (so faintly fell at times the delicate cadence) was not in the room from which shot the arrowy ray I have mentioned, but in some adjoining and more distant apartment. At length the music seemed to soar into an appealing, prolonged, and tremulous complaint, and died away.

The friends still sate as if listening, but the strain had quite ceased, and the only sounds which they now heard were the champing of their steeds upon the bit, and the cry of the "corn-crake," or land-rail, amidst the newly-mown hay of a meadow, which, from a little distance, sent its peculiar and pleasant aroma even across the dewy perfumes of the garden.

"It is Emily's voice," said Cuthbert—"I know it well; but the song is new to me. Pray. excuse our scant retainership,

Geoffrey, and ride round with me to the stables, where we shall find old Humphrey to take our horses. Bah! the mists of that swampy moss bewitched me."

CHAPTER X.

"Among the crooked lanes, on every hedge,
The glowworm lights his gem, and through the dark
A moving radiance twinkles."

THOMSON.

IN the yard they dismounted, and, at Cuthbert's loud call of "Humphrey," an old man, wearing gaiters, a stable jacket, and a large, round, horizontally convex, dogskin cap, with the hair on, emerged from a coach-house door, and inspected them for an instant. He then hurried towards them with a hobbling run, saying—

"Welcome home, Master Cuthbert! I'm joyed to see you! Service, sir," added he, touching his cap to Geoffrey, who, in return, smiled, nodded, and brought to his hat the

horsewhip which he held. As the old man placed himself between the two horses and took the bridle of each, he looked askant, and said, before moving on—

"You wasn't troubled at all, was you, Master Cuthbert, coming along?"

"Surely not. What should trouble us?" asked Cuthbert.

"Well, sir, the roads bean't safe o' nights, the last fortnight. They've been and let loose some ticket-o'-leave men on us; and just about the same time three o' the most notorietyest housebreakers have broke out of the county goal of the next shire to us, and they be a real scourge to Warwickshire. They're prowling and marauding in this neighbourhood at the present time, and down Throstledale way; and there's no catchin' on 'em. But, to be sure, we han't got no police, to speak of. The magistrates will have to 'crease the rates, and get up a 'spectable force, I'm thinking."

"That's an ugly piece of news," said Cuthbert. "Well, we, at all events, saw nothing, and met nothing, as we came up from Mandeville Park."

"Ah!" remarked Humphrey; "and this will be Master Geoffrey Mandeville, I take it! Welcome, sir! Ah, they'll be trying down that way next. Your father, Sir Walter, had best look to it in time, sir."

"Perhaps, Cuthbert," said Geoffrey, "it was those fellows when you heard that laugh, you know?"

"What laugh? Tush! I heard no laugh."

"You said——"

"Well, well, I know I said. That was not a highwayman," replied Cuthbert, gloomily. "It was," added he, mutteringly, and between his teeth—"it was no highwayman's voice that made *me* run."

"No, no," said Humphrey; "two such fine young gentlemen, well mounted, they would let alone. They warn't likely to

trouble the like. But they murdered a poor pedlar, near Leamington, the night before last."

"Is it possible," said Geoffrey.

"Ah!" rejoined Humphrey, "and they left the poor chap as naked as the day he was born—ah! did they. You know the spot, Master Cuthbert: the narrow lane between the banks, a short cut from the carriage road out o' Leamington to the Throstledale railway station."

"Surely," said Cuthbert, "I know the spot well. The station is about three-quarters of a mile from the town of Throstledale, and the carriage-road winds round the foot of the hill, whereas the lane you speak of crosses its back. There's a thick hazlewood on each hand, above the high banks."

"That's it, sir—that's the very spot. When you was a little one, Master Cuthbert, you used to be fond o' nutting in them

woods. Ah! many a day I was sent to look after you when you was lost like. But I knew where to put my hand on you, and, sure enough, there you was, with your little white handkerchief spread over your knees, all full o' nuts, and you a sittin' on the long grass, under the hedge, a cracking o' the nuts, just like a squirrel."

"True," said Cuthbert; "those times are gone!"

"Ah! them warn't bad times, them warn't. I was more nimble in the joints then! And they hadn't been and gone and let loose them ticket men on us. Now you couldn't go a nuttin' alone, big as you be grown—(and I'm joyed to see it, Master Cuthbert)—no, you couldn't, without takin' precious care to look round you before you swallowed each o' them kernels, or you might chance to ha' no throat free to swallow with."

"Is it so bad as that, Humphrey?" said

Cuthbert. "Why, Geoffrey, we have narrowly missed an adventure, it seems."

"I am content as we are," observed that sensible personage, with gravity.

"You're about right, sir, I'm thinking," said old Humphrey, nodding his head significantly. "Belike, you'll not have heard what happened last week, Master Cuthbert, to the chaplain of the gaol, Parson Trustemall?"

"No—what?"

Humphrey chuckled, for a few moments, with such inward gratification, that he bent double between the horses' heads, and was seized with a fit of coughing before he could reply.

"Why, the chaplain is the prime friend o' these ticket folk; he's always the first to give 'em a character, and you'd say they war a hinnocent aud hinjured race o' people, to hear him. They went astray—why? Cause no one trusted o' them. There was

no bowels in the land. Only you take care o' the bowels, and the throats would take care of themselves. Show yourself sweet like to the critters, and they'd come round —see if they wouldn't—like a filly to its dam. Don't be always a growlin' at 'em. 'Twarn't likely that such ways would touch their 'earts, poor things! So his recommendation gets a batch of 'em shortened from sarvitude out of Portsmouth. Well, he was a ridin' comfortable home to the Elms, arter givin' the 'ighest character to Ben Simmons not a month before. Ben was out o' Staffordshire, you see; and old Simmons was well known to the chaplain; and Mrs. Simmons, poor soul, took on dreadful, as well she might, when her son turned out ill, and took to 'ighway robbery. They got round the chaplain, who was lately removed back to his own county (he does the Stafford gaol now), and he wrote very strong about Ben. Well, he was a

ridin' comfortable home to the Elms, last Wednesday, when, just as he came to the ford of Three Towers—it might be near ten o'clock—who should jump out of the hedge and knock him off his pony, but his friend Ben! 'What, at the old tricks so soon, Ben!' says the chaplain. 'Oh! it's you, is it?' says Ben; 'well, you may keep the pony, for old acquaintance' sake, but give me a couple of sovereigns—quick!' 'I believed you a reformed character,' says the chaplain. 'Hold your jaw,' says Ben, 'and fork out. Do you think I can stand over you here all night? Come, make haste, or I'll smash your skull, and then wot would become o' the preachin' next Sunday at the gaol?' The parson had no choice but to give up his purse."

And old Humphrey resumed his chuckle, with most reprehensible glee and malice.

"But how is all this known?" asked Cuthbert.

"Why, you see, Parson Trustemall told the thing 'imself to Dr. Marlowe Harding—your uncle, Master Cuthbert; and your uncle, who is quite of the other way o' thinking about tickets o' leave, and all them cattle, laughed at 'im for his pains. I 'ave the story from Jervis, who was awaitin' behind their chairs at dinner."

"Only think," said Cuthbert, "of the man telling such a story against himself! Well, Humphrey, good-night; we'll go in now. All are well, I hope?"

"All are well, Master Cuthbert—and your sister, Miss Winny, is as active as a wild cat again. There's noa holdin' of her in."

"I'm glad to hear it," said young Harding. "Come, Geoffrey."

And as the two youths returned towards the front of the cottage, they could still hear the chuckle of old Humphrey, who led the horses to their stable.

Of Cuthbert Harding, I suspect the reader has already begun to have a rather distinct image before his mind's eye. That young gentleman's psychological development, I shall continue to leave to the incidents of my narrative; these will best finish that "picture of an interior" which I thought they could also best commence. But of his outside—his personal appearance, I have permitted myself, here and there, to say a word in my own person. I have only, therefore, to add that he looked rather older than he was. You would say that he was probably about two-and-twenty. Some persons seem older than they are in their youth, and younger in after life; presenting alike, at the age of twenty, for instance, and at that of forty, the air and impression of thirty. Others look old very early, once and for all; and others again, much fewer and rarer temperaments, seem to be endowed, both in mind and person,

with the attributes of almost immortal youth. It is a very common idea, that the children of aged parents generally wear that aspect of precocious senility to which I have alluded; but the rule is unsatisfactory. In reality, the circumstances, the health, and the mental cheerfulness or melancholy, of the parents have much more connection with this result. A wizened and puny offspring is seen to issue as often from premature, as from somewhat retarded, marriage; while the corporal and intellectual vigour evinced by the cadet of the family frequently forms a contrast to the debility of the first-born.

Cuthbert Harding's looks belonged certainly to a stage of life a little in advance of that which he had attained; and one cannot ascribe the circumstance to the operation of the assumed natural law laid down in that popular philosophy, which popular experience contradicts, and to which I have

adverted; for his little sister Winnifrid, born ten years later, and, therefore, of parents older by that much, exhibited the very opposite characteristic—seeming much more infantine than she was.

She and Cuthbert's parents met the two friends in the outer room.

When the fond welcomes and embraces which young Harding received from his father and mother were over, and when Geoffrey had been introduced, and had exchanged a hearty shake of the hand with each of the good couple, Mrs. Harding said to her son, in a rather nervous manner, and in a low voice, "Your Uncle Marlowe is here!"

"Yes," said old Mr. Harding, cracking the knuckles of his left hand with his right, and then those of his right hand with his left, as he rubbed them together. "Yes; brother Marlowe is here." And, while speaking, he jerked his elbow in the direc-

tion of the inner room, with a look by which he seemed to be endeavouring to imply that he felt no concern on that account, but which really expressed some little disquietude and agitation.

"I am glad Uncle Marlowe is come," replied Cuthbert, composedly. "Emily Whitsund, too, is here," he added, in a quicker way.

"Yes, dear," returned Mrs. Harding; "but your uncle, who is going to sleep at Lea Meadows to-night, is to take back his ward to-morrow after breakfast."

"He was only now saying," subjoined Mr. Harding, in a voice scarcely above his breath, and again cracking the knuckles—it was a trick he had when uneasy—"that he wanted to have a serious conversation with you at the earliest opportunity; and that, if you did not come to-night, you were to ride over to the Glebe at *Panes cum Piscibus*, as soon as we could spare you.

But now I suppose he will talk to you to-morrow morning, before he takes Emily back."

"I am at his service," replied Cuthbert, "either to-night or to-morrow."

When this whispering was over, a little sprightly form bounced into "brother Cuth's" arms, and called on him to remember that he had a sister.

"Ah! Winny," he cried, kissing her—"we've overlooked you too long. Why, you're grown wonderfully, dear! Your recent illness seems to have improved you. You are not so stumpy as you were!"

"Yes, and I can say Cuth, now!" and she brought out in fine style the aspirated diphthong ("th").

"True! so you can, love; and it used to be *Cut* when I was here last. Hang it! I've forgotten her bouquet in the stables," added he to himself.

"Ain't I improved?" she demanded.

"Don't say 'ain't,' you rogue. I'd call that vulgar if any but Winny said it."

"Well, am I not improved?"

"Come, don't tease your brother, Winny; there's a good girl," said the father.

"She doesn't tease me. There's room for improvement still, Winny."

"Oh, I know that!" she answered, very gravely, placing the forefinger of her right hand on her lips. Then, suddenly dismissing her air of meditative acknowledgment, she bounded into the alcove, exclaiming loudly, for the information of those within and of all concerned—"Here's Brother Cuth, from Eton!"

Young Harding, following his mother, and followed by Geoffrey and the old man, entered the same apartment, where he shook hands with an elderly gentleman and a young lady, with whose hand his became unaccountably entangled for a few seconds; and then he presented them to Geoffrey—

or, rather, Geoffrey to them—with considerable form—thus: "My friend, Mr. Geoffrey Mandeville—my uncle, the Reverend Doctor Marlowe Harding. Mr. Geoffrey Mandeville—Miss Whitsund."

The lady silently bent her neck: the clergyman rose and bowed, with marked cordiality.

"I shall be glad," he observed, "to see Mr. Geoffrey Mandeville any time when his rides or drives may bring him into the neighbourhood of my poor parsonage. I have the honour of a slight acquaintance with Sir Walter."

"I am very much obliged," returned Geoffrey, "for your kind invitation. Whereabouts does your parish lie, Dr. Marlowe Harding?"

"On the Oakton side of the county," answered the clergyman; "the parish, although humble, is well known—*Panes cum Piscibus.*"

"Hang it!" exclaimed Geoffrey; "I am not very strong in Latin, as Cuthbert knows; but that seems to me to mean, 'the loaves and the fishes along with them.' You seem well and snugly bestowed, Dr. Marlowe?"

"Your Latin does not fail you; the name is exceedingly scandalous, I admit. There is a historical memory attached to it, which I will tell you when you come to see me. It has stuck to the place ever since the utterance of a profane joke of Charles the Second's, when his amiable, but not respectable, Majesty was bestowing the living on an unworthy predecessor of mine."

By this time all the group were seated in the verandah, and Mrs. Harding, addressing young Mandeville, said—"So you and Cuthbert have left Eton together, and in your friendship and kindness you have thought proper to come between our boy and his old parents? for you took him with you to Mandeville Park, instead of allowing him

to hasten on straight to Lea Meadows first."

"Mrs. Harding, pardon me; it so happens that I did *not* take Cuthbert with me to Mandeville Park. He was there before me."

"How there before you?" exclaimed the two old people in a breath, while a movement of general surprise occurred in the circle.

"Your son has saved Lady Mandeville's life, by his noble courage and his astonishing readiness of resource, and presence of mind," pursued Geoffrey.

All eyes were raised and fixed for a moment on Cuthbert, after which they were turned upon Geoffrey. Cuthbert stole a glance towards Miss Whitsund, whose glance, also, had crept towards Cuthbert, but was now again riveted, like that of everybody else, upon him who had made so startling and, till further elucidated, so unintelligible an announcement.

"For Heaven's sake, Mr. Mandeville, what has my dear boy done?" cried Mrs. Harding; "do not keep me in suspense."

"I love him as a brother," resumed Geoffrey, with unwonted eloquence, "and I admire him as a hero; and no one in Mandeville Park, or in my family, can ever forget his conduct. Henceforth, we are all bound to him as our signal benefactor, and devoted to him as to our best friend. For my part, I am only too glad to have the opportunity of saying before his family a part of what I feel, and of what I wouldn't and couldn't say to Cuthbert alone and privately; it would be so deucedly disagreeable to be told by him that I was using flattery, or that he would like me to drop the subject, or some other of those confoundedly acid remarks, at which he is only too ready."

Probably, Geoffrey had never before in his life uttered so many consecutive words.

His eloquent vehemence, as well as the astounding purport of the statement which he made, took the whole company whom he addressed by surprise. Their looks rapidly alternated between him and Cuthbert, who bent his eyes on the ground, and turned—not red—but very pale. The Rev. Marlowe Harding, D.D., frowned thoughtfully, like a man whose calculations have been somewhat put out, somewhat dislocated—and who suspects that it will be necessary to go over them again. He, like the others, maintained an observant silence; but Mrs. Harding, who had been knitting a summer curtain, before the two friends arrived, and who was about to resume her occupation, dropped her piece of work with the needles, and, resting her hands on her knees, gazed for an instant, with lips apart, at Geoffrey.

"I am on the rack," said she; "do tell us everything. My dear Mr. Mandeville, you would not keep me in suspense, after

what you have stated. Why do you speak so of my boy?"

"Why? Why do I speak so of Cuthbert?" returned Geoffrey, solemnly. "Because, Mrs. Harding, only for your son, not only my mother, Lady Mandeville, would probably at this moment be among the dead, but because I had, apparently, just the same chances as Cuthbert had of saving her, and yet I neither knew what ought to be done, nor could I have done it if I had known; and because, above all, Cuthbert did not save my mother's life without the imminent hazard of his own."

Geoffrey then briefly, and with great feeling, related the occurrences as we have already detailed them; utterly falsifying his little sister Henrietta's depreciatory criticism upon his powers of narration, and exemplifying the wiser and juster remark of a truly great ancient thinker, who tells us that "it is the heart which produces all real elo-

quence"—*pectus est quod disertum facit.* At Mandeville Park, Geoffrey, in a flurry and frenzy of delight, after an hour of the most cruel suspense, was talking to those from whom he had as much to learn about the transaction as he could himself impart, and he had certainly then expressed his thankfulness in very incoherent and uncouth language. Indeed, he hardly knew what he was saying or doing, in his excitement, anxiety, and exultation. But on the present occasion, full of calm gratitude and of generous admiration, having to describe his friend's exploit to an audience totally ignorant of it, and at the same time naturally feeling more interest in Cuthbert than any other person on earth could be expected to entertain—thus made, I say, the historian of the event—Geoffrey told it with the most graphic and even pathetic effect. Not once did the famous expression, "stunning, sir, stunning," escape him; and Cuthbert, who

remembered Henrietta's mimicry, in vain listened for the "hundred thousand bricks." As Geoffrey concluded, Mrs. Harding wept for joy and pride—a tear glistened even in Emmy Whitsund's bright eyes — the old father loudly cried "bravo, my boy!"—and a pair of little arms were flung rapturously round Cuthbert's neck, while Winnifrid kissed him boisterously again and again, much increasing his not unpleasurable confusion by her repeated cries of "Well done, Cuth!"

The Rev. John Marlowe Harding, D.D., during this little scene, had been buried in a profound meditation; his striking and somewhat austere features exhibiting a family likeness to those of Cuthbert, especially in that firm and compressed mouth, the lines of which were so faintly, yet so decisively traced in the younger man, but deepened and made harsh by time in the elder. He had come to Lea Meadows, as

both Mrs. and Mr. Harding had mysteriously intimated to their son, not perhaps solely in order to have, but yet intending to have, "some serious conversation" with the young gentleman who formed the subject of Geoffrey's enraptured praises. Uncle Marlowe's "serious conversations" were evidently esteemed by the good couple to be conversations of a kind for which it was as well that Uncle Marlowe's nephew should be prepared by a friendly warning beforehand. During the thoughtful pause which I have mentioned, Doctor Marlowe Harding cast two or three "under glances" from beneath his beetling brows, at the youth with whom he was to "converse."

"Well," remarked the clergyman, at length, "that is one way of coming from Eton with credit and distinction. It is, at least, a comfort that my nephew is full of spirit and resources, and that he has had the good fortune to exercise them so early in so good a cause."

Geoffrey noticed that Mrs. Harding winced, while Cuthbert himself betrayed no emotion.

Nobody replied to this observation; and it seemed to be felt that, at least in Cuthbert's presence, the topic was now exhausted. Hitherto, young Harding's first evening at home had been signalized by incidents a little confusing, perhaps, but highly flattering and favourable; but the sequel of that first evening was destined to ruffle his feelings in a curious degree. He was chatting absently with his mother and with little Winnifrid, and was meditating by what means he could possess himself of the chair next to Emily Whitsund, a chair at that moment occupied by his formidable and reverend uncle, when suddenly his daring project was arrested, and a remarkable conversation, leading to various ulterior events, arose out of the following simple request—

"May I entreat of you, Miss Whitsund, to favour us with a repetition of that en-

chanting song which my friend Cuthbert and I had the luck to hear when we arrived half an hour ago ?"

This speech was addressed by young Mandeville to the lady whom he named, as she, Cuthbert, Geoffrey, and Cuthbert's father, mother, and little sister, having now adjourned all more special themes by tacit and common consent, sate together under Uncle Marlowe's austere regards in the verandah and grapery which I have mentioned, and which opened upon the flower grounds at the side of the cottage. The large room with the three windows, before which Harding and his friend had stopped to listen to the song in question, communicated by folding doors with an inner and smaller apartment, terminating in this verandah. Here the family of the Hardings and their four guests were now assembled to pass the time preceding that supper, on which Mrs. Harding had insisted

as being indispensable to her son and to his companion, whom she termed "travellers," and whom she invested with the rights and the appetite of that interesting and hungry class.

It will be well, before going further, to present to the reader more fully those about whom he knows the least. He ought to make acquaintance with Cuthbert's family. Little Winnifrid Harding was a child of about nine years old, with a face otherwise very pretty, but disfigured by a nose which exhibited a depression where there should have been either a slight elevation or a level continuance, according to all the laws of human and artistic beauty. This depression had formerly, however, been much deeper; it was gradually diminishing, and it promised to disappear altogether as the child grew up. The chief passions of her soul, so far as they had hitherto developed themselves, were pride in her brother

"Cuth," and a love for haymaking in summer, and snowballs in winter. She was a sprightly, quick-witted, observant little girl, whom it was impossible to keep out of the fruit garden after the cherries had ripened, and who was in high alliance with old Humphrey, who not only managed the stable department, but took care of the garden. She was sharp at her lessons; and, on the whole, neither with respect to her health, nor with respect to her disposition, did she give any serious uneasiness to her parents. She had, only the other day, proposed to her mother, who was a notable housewife, to begin to help her in housekeeping or, at least, to begin to learn; and, when Mrs. Harding had replied, "Well, Winny, and where shall we begin?" the little darling had rejoined, without a moment's hesitation, "with the jams and preserves, mamma!"

She was a prodigious favourite with her

father, whose surreptitious and clandestine pipe she had learned to light on apparently the most hopeless occasions; for Mrs. Harding (who would not, for the world, have seen her "good man" deprived of his peaceful cigar) retained from earlier years a sort of pretence and affectation of opposition to the robuster, fuller-flavoured, and longer-burning meerschaum. The father, in return, spoilt his little "snubby," as he called the good-humoured child, in whose face, nevertheless, he was delighted to mark the decreasing evidences of the snub, and the growing dawn of eminent attractions. Whenever Mrs. Harding displayed discontent with Winny's ill-remembered or ill-said lesson, and when Winny's cheerful countenance was clouded with the grief and bathed in the tears which quickly came under her mother's reproof, the father would seize an early opportunity of indemnifying his afflicted pet with conserves and sweetmeats, which the

mother pronounced injurious alike to her morals and to her teeth.

"Grin, Winny!" the doting father would then exclaim—"Grin, and show your teeth! Where did you ever see such a set, Mrs. Harding, except in your looking-glass! You'll have your mother's teeth, Winny—that's certain. And as to morals, go and kiss mamma, my love, and give her another kiss from her old husband, and then come and light your father's pipe. Always respect your parents, dear, and do as your mother bids you. That's a lesson for you; and now pay more attention to your books next time. Remember, it is your mother who takes the pains herself to teach you, as we can't afford you a governess; and, under these circumstances, Winny, it would be most cruel and ungrateful to afflict or displease mamma. A little more tobacco, my love."

One little occurrence had confirmed the

father's infatuated predilection for Winny. Mr. Harding, who well understood the nature of his wife's innocent affectation about his pipe, and that, provided she should be still permitted to protest undisturbed, he would assuredly be allowed afterwards to smoke unwatched, felt, nevertheless, that it would be more agreeable if he furnished her with a reasonable pretext for tolerating, under strictly understood and limited conditions, the obnoxious indulgence. Accordingly he affirmed to her, with great show of heat, on the authority of all scientific horticulturists, that the oleaginous exudations of the meerschaum rendered the fumes of tobacco still more beneficial (beneficial they were conceded to be, even from a cigar) to the vine, because those fumes killed the insects which otherwise would prey upon the life of the growing tendrils. In the vinetum, then, or grapery, or verandah, the prohibition was removed, and the

pipe passed free. That place was privileged, and, during summer, all went well. But when the cold weather came, Mr. Harding could not be beguiled even by the charms of his richly-seasoned bowl of marine froth to venture into that outpost. The pipe, therefore, lay idle on a table, and poor Mr. Harding's wistful glance stole towards it frequently as he sat by the fire. Little Winny, who had heard the previous discussion respecting the "beneficial" effects of tobacco smoke upon the vine, looked an image of mental distress and childish sympathy as she watched her father. At last she could stand it no longer, and she exclaimed—

"Mamma, I'm sure papa's pipe would be very beneficial to the insects; they are not half killed, and if you would only let him smoke his pipe, he will do them such good, and kill them all, for I will myself make the smoke go out in the morning into the

verandah, and we shall have lots of grapes in summer."

"So the way to do good to the insects, Winny, is to kill them?" said the mother, smiling.

"Ah! you know what I meant, mamma," said Winny; "if papa don't kill the insects with his pipe, they'll kill the grapes before they're ripe."

"There's reasoning for you!" cried the enraptured father. "Those are what I call deductions! That *is* thinking power! Winny, dear, where is that large-bowled pipe that your mother said was so prettily veined, and streaked, and coloured, and shaded, and clouded—only for the use it was intended for. Ahem, I don't want to use it, you know, Laura, my love," added Mr. Harding, in a mild and cheerful voice, and, turning to his wife with an atrocious assumption of sincerity and of lively resignation, which would have done credit to a

Pozzo di Borgo, a Metternich, a Nesselrode, or any other veteran member of that curious profession, the adepts of which may be called the barristers and retained counsel of international or public law—I mean diplomacy.

Winny, who wished nothing better, had quickly found and triumphantly produced the large pipe; when Mr. Harding, holding it before him for a moment with a pensive expression of admiration, extended it towards his wife, saying—

"Just look at that colouring, those dedalous tints, Mrs. Harding."

She, on the other hand, gently pushing away the wonder of a pipe, the matchless sample of slowly impregnated and whimsical encaustic, the patient production of many a sitting, declined all examination, and said, drily and inexorably—

"Have I not seen it fifty times?"

"But on each succeeding inspection, one

discovers something new," urged Mr. Harding. "It is a perfect landscape."

"Landscapes are best not clouded over, in the way in which I know you want to treat this precious 'landscape' of yours, since that is to be the word."

"I assure you, Laura, in the present instance, I am quite disinterested."

"As if I didn't know what you were at when you told Winny to fetch the pipe."

"No, on my honour, Laura; just look at it, that's all. You never saw a specimen of the rosy-threaded, many-coloured, cross-hued marble of the finest quarries of Italy, that could be compared with that bit of shading. I'm perfectly serious; it is quite a work of art, a piece of poetry in sea foam."

"Don't think you are going to cajole me like that."

"I wouldn't do it, Laura, for the world, even if I could. Perhaps you think I had

some design of that sort when I told Winny to fetch the pipe."

"How delicately you phrase it, William! No; not merely a design of that sort, but that particular and specific very design. Well, as I have taken down the curtains to be dusted, and taken off the chair and sofa covers, I don't mind if you add another vein to that many-tinted, streaky bowl."

"You mean that I should smoke?"

"If you like."

"In that case, on second thoughts, I don't mind if I do have a smoke. As Winny said, it will do the insects good, and kill them all."

And Winny proceeds to charge the pipe, in which operation the fond father each time notes with admiration the progressively increased cunning of her hand.

As it is necessary to show the kind of home into which Cuthbert's subsequent conduct and career were destined to carry

tumultuous emotions of a kind previously unknown to that unambitious and unremarked retreat, the reader will pardon these characteristic little details, exhibiting "still life" at Lea Meadows. The place became well known enough at a later epoch, separated by but a very short interval from that of Cuthbert's final return home; and if nothing were now said to give an idea of the inmates and of their manner of existence —as they had been up to this time—no good opportunity for such a picture could henceforth occur. It will not be without interest to despatch this subject at once; and, for that reason, an anecdote, in which Cuthbert also figures, may be added.

From what has been said, it is clear how great a pet Winny was with her old father; perhaps, in reality, she was not less a favourite of her wiser mother's, although the affection displayed itself in a different manner. Indeed, this vivacious child was

popular with all at Lea Meadows, down to old Humphrey, a pluralist, whom I have already mentioned as undertaking in that modest establishment the care of the stables and that of the garden simultaneously.

The portion of the garden which contained the fruit was at the end of the parterres of flower beds, which the verandah—where, at this moment, sat the family of Lea Meadows and their visitors—overlooked. Now, the fruit garden in question was enclosed by a high wall, capable, it was vainly hoped, of excluding little Winny from predatory inroads, which might prove pernicious to her health. She well knew where the cherries and other fruits were; and, although she could not have climbed the wall proper of the enclosure, her ingenuity and daring made another wall, which joined it at right angles, on the side near the stables, serve her purpose. This second wall was much lower than that

of the garden at about thirty yards from the latter, to the level of which it gradually rose; and Winnifrid, getting upon the copestone, pretty much in the attitude in which ladies sit on horseback, edged herself sideways till she reached the loftier rampart, on the top of which she could now lay her hand. The ascent afterwards from her stone side-saddle was easy. It was the descent on the farther or fruity side of this obstruction that was formidable. But, by creeping along its coping some ten or twelve yards, Winny placed herself exactly above the strawberry beds, the rich mould of which promised a soft landing to a bold jumper. When first the child adventured this enterprising expedition, she found in the garden, and at his work, old Humphrey, who was thunderstruck to behold her. His first movement was to feel in his pocket for the key of those prohibited precincts; his next was to proceed

to the door of them, which he examined. He was right. It was duly locked, as he had supposed, and the key was on the inside. Had Winnifrid dropped from a balloon? or had the knowing and almost uncanny-looking child—had this little witch been disembarked in his sacredly guarded and high-walled enclosure from the "cloudy car" of her friend, some sky-riding and far-wandering magician? That such personages were rare he knew, but that they existed he secretly believed in his heart. He had read of them in a very old and dog-leaved copy of the "Arabian Nights," given to him by Master Cuthbert on his first departure for Eton. It was, therefore, with a confused misgiving that he asked Winny how she had got into the garden; but she begged him to promise he would not tell she had been there; and when, at last, he yielded that pledge to her vehement importunities and her wheedling

prayers, not one word would she, in her turn, vouchsafe to him about her means of ingress.

"Did you fall from the clouds, Miss Winny?" he demanded.

She only laughed, but so impish was the light which darted from her sidelong glancing eye, so startling was the fifelike, shrilly, mocking, roguish, outburst of her mirth, so firmly, and yet so slightly and so lightly, set upon the ground was the agile form—upright as a dart, well poised, elastic—seeming, indeed, as if just alighted from the air, and on the very spring to reascend, that old Humphrey, who was excessively superstitious, gazed upon the keen-witted, mercurial, restless, omnipresent darling of Lea Meadows, with feelings in which a latent awe, which he would not have acknowledged even to himself, was blended with the protecting love and respectful admiration of an old retainer of the family for its youngest born.

I may mention that Winny, who was small for her years, and who looked, as I stated a little while since, younger than she was, had taken the astonishing precaution to efface the deep footprints which her valiant plunging leap had made in the strawberry bed. She had, with her hands, scraped together the loose, soft mould into the holes, and had restored it completely to its previous appearance. There, then, stood she before old Humphrey, the bloom and flush of violent exercise on her wee wee cheeks, exceedingly dirty in face and hands, her bonnet tossed, her hair disordered, her little apron filled with fruit, and the falling ends gathered up and fastened to the string which attached it round her waist, so as to form of the apron an extemporaneous bag, while a beautiful new cambric pocket handkerchief was swinging from her left hand in the shape of another and smaller bag, apparently well filled, and as ill-treated by the daring

and freakish damsel as though it had been an old rag of sacking. She had left no traces of her escalade and descent into that forbidden land; and wonderful was the contrast between her reckless disregard of personal tidiness, and the minute exactitude and scrupulous carefulness of her precautions to carry out any specific action or scheme on which she was for the moment bent. That contrast between her heedful moods and her heedless habits indicated the class of character to which she belonged. All parents who have, and all who may yet be parents and have, a perplexing and unintelligible child to rear, will not only be very far from thinking these details and touches of infantine temperament trivial or unimportant—will not only be far from deeming them unworthy of record or devoid of interest, but will be glad to pause amidst the rush, as it were, of loud and violent occurrences, to register and examine some

of the unobtrusive, but all-deciding, incidents and signs of early childhood.

Never was there a greater error, let it be said in passing, than to imagine infancy unfraught with the strong tendencies which determine the whole fate of the individual; never a greater mistake than to wait for character to develop itself. The truth is, that childhood is the very reign of character, and that idiosyncracy cannot be watched too early. In childhood, the individual triumphs over circumstances; but in after life (unless advantage, to impress on it a given direction, has been taken of the gigantic power which the will then, and then only, exercises), circumstances triumph, on the contrary, over the individual. None of us have been really so much our true selves as in early life; we are subsequently anything, or everything, which we have been then induced to prepare ourselves to become.

But to return. Humphrey vowed discre-

tion, and promised the small, strange witch before him, that he would not relate the apparition which he had seen.

One evening, however, Winny, as ill luck ordained, made her customary irruption into the garden after Humphrey had left it for the day, and had locked the door behind him. Winny helped herself, blackened her hands, blackened her face, blackened her sleeves, tore her frock, and then looked round for Humphrey. Not visible. He must be in the little garden-house—which, inside, was hung all over with rows of onions and of dried seeds, and which smelt so sweetly, and lurked so darkly, retiring half embowered under the deciduous canopy of the weeping ash, in the farthest corner of the garden, at the end of the terrible, shadowy, whispering, shuddering, ghostlike avenue of yew trees. When we return, full grown, to places which we quitted as children, we are astonished by the apparent diminution and dwarfing of

what we had supposed large. This small avenue seemed to Winny to be immense. It was growing dusk where she stood, but, beneath the over-arching shade of that fearful approach, it was already quite dark—it was black. There was no way, however, by which Winny could get out of the garden except through the open door. She could get down into it easily enough; but to emerge, *this* was the task, this the difficulty.

From the top of the lofty wall the child could boldly throw herself into the soft strawberry-bed; and then she could cunningly obliterate the traces of her jump. But she could not throw herself up again from the strawberry bed to the top of the wall.

Winny had some little fraction of the all-daring, all-confronting courage of her brother, yet it was not without a shake and shiver of her whole frame, not without a nervous groan and a chill of vague fear, that

she hazarded herself in the dark avenue conducting to the garden hut. Once within the jaws of its shadows, she ran as if fiends and goblins were in pursuit of her. Halfway she stopped, screamed, and looked round. No; there was nothing! She perceived that a cold hand had *not* been laid upon her shoulders; hideous fingers, resembling claws, had *not* clutched her poor little throat. She resumed her advance, venturing—just attempting—a slight song, but her voice quavered too much; she resigned the effort, and ran till she reached the hut door. Lifting the latch, she pushed it open, and tremulously said—

"Dear Humphrey!—dear old Humphrey! are you there?"

No answer; and if the yew tree avenue was dark, the hut was darkness itself. Looking back, she discerned the distant mouth of the avenue opening into the dim pale light of evening. Fixing her eyes

firmly upon this blessed ray, and taking the very middle of the path, she rushed back at the top of her speed. She was fleet enough, and, in daylight, surefooted enough. But, just about halfway in this unlucky path, one of the trees stretched across from side to side the lubber length of an immense gnarled root; and poor Winny, striking her foot against this obstacle, was flung with violence upon her face. All her stolen fruit was scattered out of the carefully-secured apron, and the blood gushed in a torrent from the snubby little nose. You may be very sure she never stopped to gather up the lost plunder—and, indeed, I may here remark that it was not from gluttony that Winny was in the habit of accumulating these forbidden delicacies; but partly, I believe, because forbidden they were; partly because they were acquired with such adventure; and partly (this was the grand incentive), because Winny was, by nature, a bounteous

and a boundless giver. Certain small ragged children had discovered her mysterious opulence; they were in the habit of throwing themselves in her way once or twice a week; and they were enriched by her munificence. Winny's great delight was to watch and study the countenances of these clandestine correspondents, as she poured her treasures into outstretched greasy caps, and the lifted fronts of dingy, threadbare, tattered little frocks.

But I have left the child imprisoned in the garden.

When her supper hour arrived she was, of course, sought high and low; and, to the serious alarm of her parents, could nowhere be found. Soon the strange news of Miss Winnifrid's disappearance penetrated to the stables, where Humphrey was making the bed of the aged, experienced, and soberly-conducted horse which Mr. Harding kept for his gig. Immediately the thought flashed

through Humphrey's mind that the child could be only in the garden, and that she could not get out of it on account of his absence. Exclaiming that he would soon find her, he was followed by Mr. and Mrs. Harding and by Cuthbert (for this occurred during Cuthbert's last visit home from Eton) to the door of the high-walled fruit garden. No sooner had he opened this door than the child rushed forth, like some scared and hunted animal, but was caught in her father's arms. Cuthbert stood by—attentive, observant, absorbed. "Humphrey!" cried the elder Mr. Harding, "how is this? You know that we never allow Miss Winny to go, except with ourselves, into this place. You must have left the door open some time this evening, and she must have stole in."

"Lord love you, sir," returned the old servant, "such a thing never happened me, since Miss Winny was able to toddle, as to leave that door open longer than to let

myself in and let myself out! But Miss Winny don't want doors to get in!"

"You must have admitted her yourself?"

"May I be blowed if I ever did," said Humphrey with privileged ardour; "I know my duties better. There's nothing worse for little uns than too much wall fruit, except it was the bite of a glandered horse."

During this cross-examination, Winny awaited her own turn, a very dirty fore-finger in her mouth, and a desperate resolve in her heart. She would divulge nothing about the secret method of escalade and storm. The darkness of evening concealed in a great measure the extremely damaged, battered, clay-covered, and even blood-stained, appearance of the young sorceress.

"Then you never have let her into the garden, Humphrey?"

"Never, sir; though I'm free to confess, I've sometimes let her out of it."

"That passes my comprehension," said

Mr. Harding. "How did you get in, Winny?"

Winny uttered what was half a sob and half a giggle, nor would she yield any other answer to the repeated question, although urged strongly by both her parents. Her mother said that she should be locked up till she gave the required information. But it came at once without her confession. Cuthbert had been scrutinizing the so thought impregnable defences of the garden with a sort of military eye, and with a profound insight into his wayward sister's character; and, noting the fragment of lower wall which abutted upon the otherwise more secure enclosure, he at once solved the mystery, and pointed out the secret to Mr. and Mrs. Harding.

"Is that the way you got in?" says the father, with a look of pretended indignation, but in reality suppressing, with great exertion, a violent temptation to laugh.

No answer.

"Speak, Winny!"

No answer.

"Speak, miss!"

No answer, but the little lips compressed, and the little arms drooped crosswise down, and the tiny fingers—which, in a better light, would have shown the stains of blood, incurred as she had endeavoured to staunch the effusion from her *nez retroussé*—those tiny fingers viciously clenched.

"Speak, I say, you naughty child!"

She shifted her feet and gazed into vacancy, but not a word.

"Then go with your mother. Locked up you shall be till you find the use of your tongue."

Cuthbert, who had attentively considered this scene, and who well understood the little prisoner, entered, after a quarter of an hour, the room where she was confined.

"My dear Winny," said he, just in time

to arrest a desperate movement of hers to get down from the window by the help of the ivy, "I don't ask you why you are so silly as to stay in this uncomfortable place all alone, when, without breaking your bones in that manner, a word would set you free, and make you and everybody else happy. I could not help laughing, only that I love my own little Winny. Indeed, anybody who had not great love for you would laugh, and would simply consider you a fool, not worth any more thought, and then forget all about you and your absurd obstinacy; it could not hurt others, you know. But what has poor Humphrey done to offend you? Why are you so cruel to poor Humphrey?"

"Cruel to Humphrey? I love dear old Humphrey."

"Then he will go away, unless you answer papa's questions. It will be thought that he helped you."

"He never helped me."

"Well, answer papa's questions, and come out of this stupid room. What is the good of staying here? Just tell me that. Is it pleasant? Hark you, Winny, give me a hearty kiss, and come along with me. If I am vexed, I don't try to hurt myself; *I* am not a fool. I don't want people to feel that they could laugh at me till the tears ran down their cheeks, only that their affection made them pity me instead. I don't even want to be pitied."

"But I'm ashamed to answer now, Cuth, after refusing."

"What a clever rogue you are!" returned the attentive and skilful envoy, without directly noticing this last demurrer of his sister's. "That broken wall, eh! A capital idea, on my honour! First rate! I'm proud of you, Winny, dear! But you have carried your wounds from the wars, love; your nose has been bleeding."

While yet speaking, he walked towards

the fireplace and pulled the bell-rope. The summons was quickly answered by the housemaid, Margy.

"Miss Winnifrid has ordered some warm water in a basin, some soap, and a towel, to be brought here," said Cuthbert. "See to it immediately, Margy."

The articles in question quickly came, and Cuthbert shortly afterwards had the pleasure of marching Winny into the room where her father and mother were awaiting the uncertain moment of repentance. She now replied to every question frankly.

I need not dwell upon the singular and precocious art of every word that Cuthbert had addressed to his resentful sister. He had undertaken to bring her to terms within half an hour: the mother sighed, and old Harding shook his head to signify that, in this case, Cuthbert overrated the extent of his eloquence and tact; ere five minutes elapsed he had, however, accomplished his

promise. In part, he had made his appeal to what was best, but, in part to what was worst, in Winny's character—to her affection and sense of justice chiefly—but also to her pride, a worsted, but still resisting and desperate, enemy, for whose easy retreat he had made a bridge, not "of gold," but of the broken wall near the stables.

While others, whom I must leave it to my tale to pourtray, wait to give me a sitting, I have been too long detained by this child, of whom I will, therefore, add merely that her popularity extended to the kitchen, and that the cook never made any pastry for the table of the seniors without slily putting aside a small perquisitional and prescriptive patty, cake, or pie, which was known, and sacred, as "Miss Winny's tax."

CHAPTER XI.

"Though I, perchance, am vicious in my guess,
As I confess it is my nature's plague
To spy into abuses."

Iago, in Othello.

THAT young lady, whose character was sketched in the last chapter, now proudly stood by her brother's chair in the verandah, listening, with parted lips, to Geoffrey Mandeville's history of the transaction in which Cuthbert had so conspicuously figured. At quite the other end of the glazed and vine-hung bower sat Miss Whitsund, facing Cuthbert, and making him return rather absent-minded replies to his sister's occasional whispers.

Miss Whitsund was the daughter of a lieutenant-colonel of the line, who had fallen on the field of battle in the East. Her mother had died while the little Emily was still in long clothes. That mother was sister to the Reverend Dr. Marlowe Harding's wife; and, as the colonel was condemned by his profession to frequent and prolonged terms of exile, in which it did not suit his views to take his child with him, he had made an arrangement by which the infant found, even during part of his lifetime, a home with her aunt, Mrs. Marlowe Harding, to whom, therefore, she came, in her vacations, from that convent in France where it was her father's wish that she should receive her education. Upon the colonel's death in battle, it was found, by his will, that the Reverend Dr. Harding had been constituted guardian of the orphan, and the prayer and behest of that solemn document required him, in all respects, to

assume, until her marriage, the control and management of the little estate which the colonel had left to his daughter.

This arrangement had naturally brought young Cuthbert Harding into acquaintance with his uncle's fair ward, at a very early age. Indeed, Cuthbert's childhood and Emily's childhood had played together.

Hence arose, later, the opportunities for that premature engagement which Cuthbert had succeeded in extorting or surprising. The audacity of the youthful lover had wooed the inexperience of the beautiful orphan. It must not be inferred, however, that the Hardings of Lea Meadows and those of the Rectory, known by the auspicious name of *Panes cum Piscibus*, moved in the same sphere of society. The two brothers visited each other indeed, but not each other's friends. The clergyman still held up his head in the circles where his forefathers had immemorially been at home; but the

brewer had sunk out of their ken and recognition into quite another grade. As a child, Cuthbert could not feel or discern this disparity of social station; but, latterly, his observant mind had become fully aware of it, and his spirit ruffled its rebellious plumage within him—

"And shook
The strength of its unconquerable wings."

At the same time he found the situation anything but simple. It revolted him to note the air of superiority, and the dictatorial protection, which his uncle, the doctor, dared to assume towards his father, the brewer. But, on the other hand, it was the uncle who had so generously sent him to Eton, and who had paid for his schooling; it was the uncle who had more than once called on him there; it was his uncle who had always "tipped" him; and it was his uncle who had pronounced, with direct reference to him (Cuthbert), the words which—boy

though he was when he first heard them—had so often thrilled in his memory, and made him feel an inch taller with the pride of conscious responsibility, and of trust reposed—I mean the words: "There shall at least be *one* gentleman in the family." *He* was to be that gentleman—he, Cuthbert! Add to this that he was not ashamed of his uncle, who had some reputation as a scholar, and who occupied besides, as I have hinted, the old position of the family in the county, a position which his father, the head of that family, had abdicated. On the other hand, Cuthbert, in self defence, as it were, could not forget whose son he himself was; and, in this smouldering and chronic dissension between the two brothers, his calculations were held in suspense by opposing magnets. William Harding was his father; but Marlowe Harding was the guardian of Emily Whitsund, upon whom, by-the-by, at the moment at which we are now arrived,

Cuthbert observed that Geoffrey Mandeville's eyes were fixed with an almost ludicrous expression of wonder and entrancement. While Geoffrey was telling his story of their adventures at Huntingferry and at Mandeville Park, Miss Whitsund's face had been shaded by one of the festoons of vine leaves which hung from the ceiling; but, in her interest, and in the eagerness of her attention, she had leant forward, as he concluded, to transfer her gaze from the narrator, to the hero of the tale; and now, therefore, a ray of the moonlight fully revealed her countenance to our astonished friend, Geoffrey.

It is only probable, in truth, that he had never before beheld such a vision. Mention has been made of the small estate which Colonel Whitsund had bequeathed to his daughter; but her richest heritage, beyond all comparison, she had derived straight from nature.

Her slight form was of exquisite propor-

tion: her fair young head was set with statuesque effect on the snow-white dazzling throat, which made the ivory paper-cutter with which she was playing, and which she, ever and anon, applied in a musing attitude to her roseate, dewy lips, look yellow and dingy. She wore the great wealth of her sheeny brown hair braided halfway off the faint, delicate bloom of her oval cheeks, and gathered into a loose copious knot at the back, from which a few stray tresses hung carelessly. The forehead, which was well filled, displayed a trenchant elegance in the outlines; and, while producing a pensive and gentle effect, if viewed from the full front, offered a profile resolutely Greek, and of the severest purity. A strange play of greater and less lustrousness was occasioned by the development of parts of this moderately high forehead (for it was not an even, expressionless, dead surface); and you would almost say that you were looking at a trans-

parency, and that some limpid light was burning within, behind a slender screen of alabaster. Her eyebrows, which were dark brown, traced an almost oriental arch; while the eyelashes, equally dark, and unusually long, almost shaded the pale cheek, when she looked down. At such moments, so still, and hushed, and harmonious, was the expression of the whole head and countenance, that they gave you the idea of a classic Muse in meditation, an aspect which only rendered more startling the effect of the bright blue eye, long and oval as the almond, when the veil of those darkling lashes was suddenly lifted, and when the glittering, swordlike glance flashed forth. The whole face was then wondrously irradiated. The sleepy, dreamy, muselike statue had vanished, and one feeling of admiration was lost in another still deeper.

The power which Emily Whitsund's beauty exercised was not due to the mere

material perfection of the features and person. That beauty had character, and the character was not to be mistaken. Loftiness and greatness of thought, tempered by the physiognomical promise of an unspeakably sweet and gracious disposition, were marked in every line; while a certain sadness, or, at least, pensiveness, not transiently impressed, not even resulting from the looks and play of the countenance, but permanently appertaining to the very style of it, and equally conveyed in the gentle and slow manner, added a new interest where it might have been supposed there was room for none.

This young lady had been "brought out" —or, as it is more fastidiously phrased, had been introduced—not quite a year. Moreover, her formal entrance into the extra domestic world had not been made in the larger and more turbid arena of London—the avocations and tastes of a country

rector's wife not affording much opportunity for that. It might come later, if advisable. But, meantime, the first appearance, and all the succeeding appearances, of the brave soldier's beautiful orphan, in mixed society, and in the character of one who had just emerged from the tutelage of girlhood, had occurred amid the comparatively retired scenes and restricted circles of the country where her guardian resided. Yet, in the memory of the living, no such sensation had been produced by a similar event, and long was the remembrance of Emily Whitsund's maiden career destined to be preserved. Brief as hitherto that career had been, tattle had classed her among the breakers of hearts —a designation frequently, and even currently, flung out in the stories and discussions of which some girl of unequalled, and therefore envied, beauty is the subject. Like many other such attempts to sum up the judgment of an individual's character

in an epithet or denomination, it was true in the letter, and false, as well as malignant, in the spirit. It was not Miss Whitsund's fault if she had refused, in a twelvemonth, more offers of marriage than all the other young ladies of the county together could boast of having received within the previous half-dozen years. In not one of these instances had she encouraged, by a heedless word or look, the proposals which she declined; and yet she had declined, not without a pang of compassion, each succeeding suitor; and the thought of his grief sometimes would cost her whole nights of sleeplessness. If she gave pain, she felt it. She pained many, because she had pleased all. She had trifled, however, with no one's affections. She could not help the love which several youths of the country, some of whom had a very brilliant future to offer —she could not help the love which they had imbibed, and by which they had allowed

themselves to be transported. They had taken love in her presence, as they might have taken cold in a draught. But the malady was pleasant up to a certain point, and they would not avoid the occasion. They it was who deserved the blame.

Meanwhile Dr. Marlowe Harding began to feel more surprised that all these proposals should be refused, than that so many should be made. The reader knows more of the cause than Emily's uncle by marriage knew at first. Cuthbert Harding, just before Emily Whitsund was to enter the outer world (when he would necessarily cease to monopolize the opportunities of her society)—just before that change in her position which he anticipated with jealous repugnance and presaging terror, had availed himself of the advantage which hitherto none shared with him, and had used the influences resulting from childish companionship, and from long habits of familiar affection, to build a ram-

part round the girl's liberty. He was, as yet, without a rival; but rivals were coming —they were at hand, and they were only the more formidable because he could not yet say who or what they might be. They might be numerous; they might be superior to him in station, in personal accomplishments, in congeniality with Emily's character, in general suitableness; his uncle, moreover, would be likely to throw the weight of a guardian's advice and influence into the scale adverse to him; the associations of infancy, on which he placed his chief reliance, were about to be effaced by new and exciting relations: he would wait no longer; he would at once secure Emily by an engagement, or she would, probably, for ever escape him. He would bind and fetter beforehand the poor child's moral freedom, circumscribing her chances in life to the orbit of his own destiny.

Such were the reflections of that wary

and precocious intelligence, and upon those reflections he had acted. Unfair and cruel, nine times out of ten, is an engagement obtained under such circumstances and by such means, and terrible are the eventual consequences not seldom found to be. But, in the present case, there was one element which young Harding had not taken into his calculations. In how many instances, the refusal of so many advantageous matrimonial offers, following each other rapidly in one year—in how many such instances, or whether in any one of them, the young beauty had been influenced by the remembrance of the promise which bound her to Cuthbert Harding, rather than by indifference to the merits of the rejected suitor, or by incapability of reciprocating his affection, will presently be seen. She felt herself tied to Cuthbert; but, whether it was the vow to him, or whether it was love for him, which always had dictated her rejection of

others, and whether the recollection of the vow itself (originally springing from her childish partiality), was now calculated to maintain or to foster that partiality, the story will explain of itself. Having thus briefly indicated the general situation of the persons chiefly interested, I return to the group in the conservatory of Lea Meadows.

Geoffrey Mandeville, having perfectly satisfied himself, by the long and astonished gaze which he bestowed on Miss Whitsund, that the taste of his friend, young Harding, was not at all at fault, and that the lady before him might well be the object of any man's love, suddenly recollected himself. Her really extraordinary beauty had taken him by surprise. He was ashamed to have been betrayed into such ill manners; but nobody had observed it, he hoped. And, thereupon, with the look of a conscious culprit, he turned in his chair, casting a hasty glance round the circle. No—not

even Cuthbert had seen him. But at what was Cuthbert smiling?

Geoffrey was mistaken; his friend had noticed and had read that protracted stare of amazed admiration, but he had averted his sidelong, detecting glance in time to escape Geoffrey's timid inspection.

Young Mandeville—partly, perhaps, to cover or to divert a sense of awkwardness—now addressed to Miss Whitsund the request already mentioned.

"May I entreat of you, Miss Whitsund, to favour us with a repetition of that enchanting song, which Cuthbert and I had the luck to hear when we arrived half an hour ago?"

"Oh!" with pleasure; "but I am more used to sing it with another. Indeed, I have always had a second, or have myself made the second, till to-night. Would you favour me by trying to take the second, Mr. Mandeville?"

"I should be only too happy," replied Geoffrey; "but, though passionately fond of music, I don't know a note of it. My friend Cuthbert, however, sings famously. He has a voice, which—which——"

"A very fine voice, I know," said Miss Whitsund, hastening to the aid of young Mandeville's halting rhetoric. When not roused by some stinging excitement, or impelled by some powerful feeling, Geoffrey's eloquence was habitually apt to stumble, both in men's and in women's society—a fatal defect, had not his worldly position been secure. Such persons seldom force their own way in life. We all know the boast of Wilkes, the most hideous-looking individual of his age: "Give him half an hour's start of conversation against the handsomest dull man you pleased, with any woman equally a stranger to both, and he would undertake that she should forget alike his own ugliness and his rival's per-

sonal advantages." So far, it was a compliment to the understanding of women, a compliment which is well deserved, since it is indorsed by the testimony of every day's experience. Young Mandeville had not that habitual fluency or felicity in expressing himself, and he cared not a rush for it.

> "So in that way of talking without thinking
> He had a strange alacrity for sinking."

"A very fine voice, I know," said Miss Whitsund. "Will you, then," she added, looking at Cuthbert, with a sweet smile, "try the second with me? There never was a more simple air. It needs but to be sung with feeling. I would not give such trouble," continued she, raising, from a cushion at her feet, a pretty guitar, enamelled in mother-of-pearl, "only that I have been spoilt in this song. After once perceiving the wonderful improvement it acquires from the second voice, I dislike singing it alone, if I can help it."

Young Harding had risen with his heart beating thick and fast, as soon as Miss Whitsund had turned towards him the smiling look I have mentioned. He was not surprised at the surprise of Geoffrey, for, even within the past year, and since he had met her, Emily Whitsund's beauty had been strikingly developed. Cuthbert, moreover, was enthralled by various circumstances. Her acquaintance with other languages and other literatures (the natural result of her education abroad), her superiority to himself in knowledge of the arts, and her grace of movement and of action, produced on his mind an effect even deeper than that caused by her surpassing beauty. But that effect was accompanied by a vague uneasiness. Was he the person most fitted or most likely, by position, character, and personal qualities, to captivate such a maiden?

He had heard, besides, while at Eton, in

occasional allusions and general news interspersed through his correspondence with home (in the letters of his mother, and even in the brief, incipient scrawls of little Winny, as well as through Geoffrey's epistolary gossip from Mandeville Park), something of the numerous offers with which Miss Whitsund had been besieged—something of that blockade of love or admiration which she had sustained. She had, it was rumoured, refused this gentleman and that; she was going to be married—no, it was broken off. Lord James Woodburn had certainly proposed—splendid match—most extraordinary—Lord James had gone off in great mortification—surely, Uncle Harding could see nothing objectionable in such an alliance! Could Emily herself have refused Lord James?—and he so handsome? Very mysterious! nothing could please her. Did she expect a dukedom? Many said it must be some such vanity, and that she reckoned

on no less. Or was she in love with some low fellow?—was there some clandestine sort of attachment which rendered her insensible to her dignity, her interests, and her happiness? That was the theory of others.

A feeling of pride, and a pang of anxiety, were simultaneously awakened in Cuthbert by these fragments of intelligence. He applauded himself for the engagement by which he had anchored his hopes; he had foreseen the storms of passion or ambition which would arise in that outer sea of the great world upon which the young life of Emily was about to be adventured, and he had prepared for the crisis. But would the cable stand the strain? In what kind of ground was it to drag? Was he sure of her character, on the one hand? and could he face his various rivals with a good chance of superiority to *all* of them, on the other? Were they all such as Geoffrey's far better

position, and yet not dread the issue. But were they all such as Geoffrey? Among the well-bred nobodies—among the ordinary, average, polished rabble—was it certain that not one brilliant character, not one energetic heart and vivid intelligence, was it certain that not one such should be found?

It may appear strange (for no decisive, no direct clue whatever, pointed in that direction), but it is the case, that young Harding's mind was haunted for the last twenty-four hours by the image, or by what served for such—of one individual. There was one name which seemed continually to be murmured in his ear. But why dread that individual? why think he heard that name in particular? He had never even seen the person in question; he could not know how great or how small were his merits or attractions; and, what is more remarkable, he had not heard that Miss Whitsund was so

much as acquainted with him. It is to be ascribed, then, only to the self-tormenting or presentimental character of certain minds, that this one person should detach himself from the vague and misty crowd whom Cuthbert bodied forth in his imagination as pursuing Emily Whitsund, and should stand out clearly and sharply defined in the visions of his jealous terror.

Cuthbert, when Miss Whitsund asked him to take the second part of the song, rose, as has been stated, and, making an apology for such a demand, asked his uncle, with respectful audacity, to exchange chairs with him.

The reverend gentleman looked, at first, as though his nephew had asked him to exchange coats, or even heads. But the request was reasonable, it was even necessary, and the defeated divine retreated austerely. So far, so good; but the youth's triumph was short-lived. Miss Whitsund

handed him the music of the song, in which the words were interlined.

"You wish me to sing this?" he said. "Why, I cannot even read it! This is a German song."

And thus, after a few confused remarks on both sides, during which Miss Whitsund innocently asked (to Dr. Marlowe Harding's intense scandal), "What, then, do they teach you at Eton?" she consented to sing alone. This time the music failed to please Cuthbert so highly as when he had heard it first; but Geoffrey was more enthusiastic than before.

"You say," said Cuthbert, "that you have been spoiled for singing that beautiful song by yourself. You have, then, been able to find, in our rustic circles, somebody who not only knows music well enough, but knows German also?"

"Oh, yes. He sings beautifully. It was he who gave me, and, indeed, taught me, the song."

"I did not catch the name," pursued Cuthbert.

"The name!" replied the lovely girl, with an air of abstraction and pensiveness which escaped not the uneasy glance and much-conjecturing, much-misgiving mind of Cuthbert, "the name! Oh, the name is 'Die unglückliche Verbindlichkeit.'"

"Ehem!" answered Cuthbert, "that appears to be the name of the song in German. But what is the name of the person who knows German, and sings so well, and gave you, and taught you, the song?"

The rest were now all talking, and no one noticed the little dialogue apart, which was carried on almost in a whisper.

"I beg a thousand pardons," she said with a faint blush, like the inside of a sea-shell (the blush Cuthbert did not at all relish). "I beg a thousand pardons. The name of the person? Oh, it was Mr. Algernon Childering."

Cuthbert, although he had asked with a presentiment of this name, started as if he was shot, and fixed on the young lady a searching glance, which again made the red blood mantle in her cheeks; but this time a slight tinge of indignation was blended with her confusion. Innocence can blush as well as guilt; and, indeed, innocence blushes oftener; and, unaccountable as it may seem, there are characters who, under the consciousness of an inquisitorial scrutiny, will betray more awkwardness if they do not deserve it, than if they do. Guilt is prepared, where innocence is not. Young Harding had never read nor heard Paul de Gondi's profound maxim, that, in dealing with people, we should always suppress the appearance or air of suspecting them, and, nine times out of ten, even the suspicion itself. It may be, Cuthbert had never heard of this counsel (his studies had not extended to French political and social literature);

but he felt instinctively, that, in the present instance, he would be unwise to betray the thoughts which were lurking "in the recesses of a mind capacious of such things." He took the guitar which Miss Whitsund was placing back on the cushion, and, while examining it, said, with an assumed look of carelessness—

"I have never had the pleasure of meeting the younger Mr. Childering, but I hear he is quite a superior person. What is he like? Is he considered handsome?"

For an instant, Miss Whitsund naturally hesitated; but, with brave simplicity, replied—

"He is considered so, and is so."

"So is my friend, Geoffrey Mandeville," pursued Cuthbert. "Is young Mr. Childering endowed with such good looks?"

"This," said Miss Whitsund, "is to me quite a new point of view in which to regard Mr. Algernon Childering, or any other gentle-

man. I never thought whether he was, or was not, handsome, till you asked me. Do you generally ask ladies whether they consider gentlemen handsome?"

Although these abrupt words contained a withering reproof of Cuthbert's ill-bred question, they were not spoken with that intention, but modestly and naturally. It little mattered, however, for Cuthbert scarcely heard them. His gaze was riveted upon the guitar.

At the broader end, a small, round plate of ivory, shaped like an heraldic shield, was niello'd into the wood, and encircled with a border of flowery inlaying. The plate was obviously designed to receive initials, or a name, or a crest, or a motto—or, in fine, any little device which might suit the phantasy of the owner. But it presented an exquisite miniature portrait of Emily herself. This it was which had arrested Cuthbert's attention. He knew that Miss Whitsund

could draw and paint; but it was absurd to suppose that she had sat down for this purpose before her looking-glass. Most certainly, she would not have selected herself as the person from whom she would "ask a sitting." Besides, so far as his memory served him, she, although sufficiently accomplished in the art, could not have drawn—and, above all, she could not have painted—in a style approaching the marvellous excellence of the little fairy portrait before him. It spoke of a master hand. Cuthbert was lost for a few seconds in the contemplation of that exquisite production. Two or three times he sighed almost imperceptibly.

"Pardon me," said he, looking up at length, "your manner to me is changed, Emily. Do you forget all?"

"You can fear that I should forget? Is it so?" she replied.

"No, no, dearest Emily; but I am so little worthy of you; so many would envy

me; so many are less undeserving of your thoughts; absence, you know, is always so full of fears and self-torture. I most eagerly await the opportunity of a long conversation. To-morrow, I shall rise early; let me meet you; I have much to say, on which my whole life depends. I shall expect you in the old bridle path, which winds beyond the garden—where we used once to stroll together, Emily—yes, yes, building stately castles in the air. Is no ruin of them all left in your memory? You were never cold and distant to me then! I cannot, here and now, speak what is in my mind, what is torturing it. Will you meet me?"

She bowed silently, with a look of sad kindness—a sweet, pensive, pained expression. He noticed it.

"Before seven?" he added.

Again she bent her head.

"Thanks, from my heart, even for this," he said.

He still held the guitar.

"Until then, let me talk to you of anything. No matter what. To see you, to address you, to hear your answers—however brief and cold—is better than the absence which has rendered me so wretched. A word, I repeat—even your brief, cold replies—are better than to be forbidden to see you and to speak with you. You seem pained! Is my very presence become so disagreeable?"

"I seem what? Pained!"

"You scarcely answer me."

"Yes. I answer you," said she.

"Well, well," he returned, with a sigh, "I deliver you from all this—I free you from the subject. To change it, let me assure you that this guitar has given me a shock of astonishment."

"A shock of astonishment!" she replied, stealing a timid glance towards him, which made his heart throb fast.

"Yes," pursued he; "I had not thought it within the means of mortal art, potent as it is, to have done justice to that face and head."

"Oh!" she confusedly said, "the portrait!"

"Pray, whose work is the portrait?" asked he.

Miss Whitsund had nothing to conceal. Indeed, what would have been the inference, had she made any mystery of the question? Yet, the question jarred upon her feelings; she could not have said why. The reply, however, jarred still worse on the feelings of Cuthbert. It was one of those inquiries which must be answered, and for this reason, that silence itself is an answer, and happens to be the least convenient that could be given. Such inquiries are like some invisible lasso, flung true—you cannot shake them off. Therefore, secretly and undefinably displeased at feeling herself pressed,

pinioned, by the consummate, but unperceived art of her lover, she said, coldly—

"The portrait is the work of Mr. Algernon Childering."

"He must be truly accomplished," said Cuthbert, slowly, and, as it were, with difficulty.

The beautiful girl, who was deadly pale, preserved silence. Cuthbert, with feelings unspeakable in his heart, but calm and elegant in look, manner, voice, now threw again the unseen lasso.

"You could scarcely," remarked he, "have expected the task to be executed in that artistic, that masterly style, when you entrusted Mr. Algernon Childering with the guitar, that he might fill up the ivory plate, either thus, or as best his skill might enable him."

"Entrust! I entrust! You mistake. I never gave him the guitar. I missed the instrument for awhile; and then, suddenly,

I found it again on my aunt's table, with this miniature occupying the ivory plate."

"Drawn and painted from memory," murmured Cuthbert; "there is certainly an astonishing talent shown in such a freak; it was gracefully imagined too."

Miss Whitsund looked at him to see if he spoke ironically; but he was perfectly grave, and was contemplating the likeness with a candid and placid look of admiration. Something bitter had, indeed, risen to his lips; but he had a habit, when much interested, of putting himself, imaginarily, in the place of the person to whom he was speaking, and then he would ask, mentally, "How would it sound? how would it look? What would be the impression, the effect?" Over anxiety made him lose this habit ere his career was accomplished; forgetting to act on a maxim the justness of which he well knew, and which, at this date, was

seldom out of his mind—that precisely by how much more one is anxious, precisely by that much it is the more needful not to be tyrannized over, or influenced, by anxiety. He felt, or he fancied, in the present instance, that irony, sarcasm, could in no way advance him; that it would grate upon Miss Whitsund's ear; and, in truth, that it would be out of place in itself. The oftener he heard of this Algernon Childering, the less applicable to him appeared the assumption of anything like a depreciatory—or, at all events, a satirical tone. Nor was Cuthbert at all anxious that Emily Whitsund should impute to him an ungenial and sardonic temper.

Thus musing, or rather electrically lightening, with an excited and thunder-laden spirit, from reflection to reflection, Cuthbert mechanically laid down the guitar, and, in order to make room for it upon the cushion, took up the printed song. During the low-

toned conversation just detailed, the rest of the party in the conservatory had been occupied in their own manner. Dr. Harding, when he had been manœuvred by Cuthbert out of the chair beside Miss Whitsund —like the Tartars and Moguls, who, when attacked and driven away by their enemies in the obscure depths of Central Asia, carried their swords westward to overrun Europe in compensatory conquest and atoning glory— like that Hunnish horde, I say, Dr. Marlowe Harding rolled his portly weight towards the seat which little Winny had seized by Geoffrey Mandeville's side, and, irresistibly dislodging that feeble occupant, availed himself of the chance of cultivating an intimacy with Sir Walter Mandeville's heir. Oxford furnished him with a natural and congenial topic, and to the lively conversation which ensued (for Dr. Marlowe Harding had great tact, and could adapt himself in a moment to Geoffrey's taste), Mr. William

Harding and Winny were amused and curious listeners.

By this means it happened that Cuthbert and Emily were left to interchange, undisturbed and nearly unheeded, the questions and answers I have mentioned. But there was one person whose glance stole frequently towards the youthful couple, and rested, not without an expression of unquiet sympathy, upon the pale brow of Cuthbert. One glance there was which thus hovered round him. It was his mother's. She had studied too long and too closely her son's physiognomy to be deceived by any of its phases. She alone in the world had been entrusted, from the beginning, with the secret of that engagement in which her boy had garnered up, as she believed, the hopes of his life, and all his chances of happiness.

She had now followed, with a kind of magnetic intuition, all the turns of a dialogue, not a word of which reached her

ears; and, although she could not have said literally what passed, she could have said, at least, in what mood Cuthbert uttered each sentence, and what effect each sentence of Emily's produced on him. It was curious to see Mrs. Harding, as she mechanically pursued her knitting, her look raised to the speakers beyond hearing, as if they were not beyond it, every inaudible word apparently understood—occasionally the point of a long needle applied absently to her temple (for when Mrs. Harding was unusually meditative, she would thus scratch her temple with the point of her needle)—occasionally, again, as she looked, she heaved an unconscious sigh.

But what has now happened? Ah! what has happened? Mrs. Harding had become very pale; she had dropped her work into her lap; her hands were folded quietly together upon her knees; and a tear stood in her eyes. Long and sad was the gaze which

she fixed upon her son. What she beheld in his face I cannot explain; all I can do is to record what had passed, at that moment, between Miss Whitsund and Cuthbert Harding.

It has been stated that young Harding, in putting down the guitar on the cushion, had mechanically taken up, to make room for it, the song. In doing this, the title caught his eye. He could hardly, at that moment, trespass on Miss Whitsund to the extent of asking her to translate the whole of the words for him; yet he burned to know what it was that the girl who was plighted to him —what it was that she and this Algernon Childering had often, doubtless, sung together. The thought flashed across his mind that, if he knew the title, he might be able to guess at the style, the class of song, and, perhaps, the general drift and very purport of the words. He could not forget with what melancholy pathos, with

what plaintive feeling, with what an impassioned, trembling emotion, Emily's sweet voice, as he and Geoffrey listened outside, had penetrated through the casement, and had seemed to soar away like a complaint to Heaven.

Thus brooding, he pointed to the heading, and said—

"You call this song——"

"Die unglückliche Verbindlichkeit," she answered, with a look of alarm, but a look so new and so genuinely innocent, that it was clear she now, for the first time, observed the atrocious and terrible coincidence, whatever it was, which lurked in those words.

"And that means in English——?" persisted Cuthbert, on whom nothing in the lady's manner was lost—"how do you translate it?"

"Let me see," she returned, bending over the music, more and more disconcerted;

"that means—means—'*The unfortunate engagement.*'"

Cuthbert slowly, dreamily, turned towards her. He fixed upon her a long and melancholy gaze; then he rose from his chair, and, without uttering one word, left the verandah and retired into the large adjoining room, in which, as I have mentioned, nobody had remained.

It was at this moment, and on seeing this movement of her son's, that Mrs. Harding had betrayed the emotion which had been described.

CHAPTER XII.

"She used to singe his powdered wig,
To steal the staff he put such trust in,
And make the puppy dance a jig
When he began to quote Augustin."

PRAED, *The Vicar.*

"His talk was like a stream which runs
With rapid change from rocks to roses;
It slipt from politics to puns;
It passed from Mahomet to Moses."

PRAED, *Ibid.*

IT will, perhaps, be remembered that Dr. Harding proceeded at once, with heavy and phlegmatic prowess, to dislodge Winny from the chair beside Geoffrey Mandeville, as soon as he—that reverend and redoubtable doctor—had been deprived of his own beside his beautiful ward, by the adroit audacity

of Cuthbert. Winny, thus dispossessed, cast her eyes round the circle, and at first seemed inclined to follow Cuthbert, and again plague him to solve the multifarious problems which succeeded each other, like bubbles in an eddy, or grains of dust from a threshing-floor, in her very discursive conversation. But she vaguely felt, as she glanced at the earnest and preoccupied air of the two, that this was no moment to disturb her brother and Miss Whitsund. The next truth which beamed on her observant mind was, that all who usually took note of her movements, and curbed her rather devious, erratic, and eccentric orbits, were now fully absorbed. She noiselessly vanished, therefore, into the outer room, and thence went on an exploring expedition to the kitchen, to ascertain in what state of forwardness was the repast which she knew that her mother had ordered to revive her "travelling" son and his friend.

Mrs. Harding still sat gazing with her wan and piteous eyes on her son's abruptly deserted place (the incident which was mentioned at the close of the last chapter, having just occurred), when Winny burst into view between the folding doors, with the highly satisfactory intelligence which she thought proper to announce thus: "s—u—upper, supper! s—u—upper, supper!" This specimen of spelling power was given with astounding rapidity of utterance, in a shrill and excited tone, and with a genuine appreciation of the interesting nature of the event itself which was thus proclaimed.

"Winny, for shame!" said Mrs. Harding. "You ought to be in bed."

"No, mamma, this is brother Cuth's first night at home! You said I might stay up for s—u—upper, supper! s—u—upper, supper! And Humphrey is going to bring it! Oh, you need not stir yet, uncle!

Humphrey is only just laying the cloth. I saw him."

"Where is your brother, dear?" said Mrs. Harding, looking all round the verandah in vain.

At that moment, Cuthbert reappeared in the doorway, against the sill of which he leant, throwing an arm round the neck of Winny, who turned and gazed up at him with a smile, saying—

"I knew very well it was you?"

Not a trace of emotion remained now on the youth's countenance. It was open and calm—the sole change (and none but his mother remarked even this) was, that the light which burned in his dark grey eyes was more than usually vivid—while the daring character natural to the whole face, seemed to her to be somehow brought out with more marked effect. Only a practised painter or sculptor could have laid his finger on the particular lineaments which produced

this expression; and, indeed, it may not have proceeded from the lineaments at all, but from a certain gallant, challenging sit of the head, which was well thrown back.

Winny's proclamation had broken up the doctor's and Geoffrey's conference, and had drawn all eyes towards her. The consequence was distressing, for Mrs. Harding, after perusing the child's costume with an understanding glance, demanded—

"Where is your beautiful new plum-coloured silk sash, Winny? What have you done with it, child?"

Winny held down her head sideways, and hearing Cuthbert utter a low laugh, looked up at him out of the corners of her eyes, with mingled astonishment and anxiety.

"I know where it is," said Cuthbert, darting at her a penetrating glance.

"I'm sure you don't," murmured Winny, her mind, however, much misgiving her, despite of that stout asseveration.

Cuthbert whispered in her ear—

"You reckless, wasteful child, you have made a garter of it!"

Winny blushed crimson, and, full of consternation, said—

"How did you know?"

But, instantly rising on her toes, and placing her hand over his mouth, she added—

"Don't tell, Cuth, dear! Don't tell!"

"No, I won't tell," said he. "If you be the first there, you will find what you want —ahem—on the ground, near the door of the drawing-room."

She vanished. When she returned, she had her plum-coloured silk sash round her waist, but looking disgracefully crumpled.

Humphrey just then appeared, and announced supper.

Cuthbert instantly approached Emily Whitsund, and offered her his disengaged arm, for Winny hung fast upon the other.

Geoffrey took Mrs. Harding, the doctor and his brother following last.

Mrs. Harding, who was separated from Cuthbert only by Winny, took advantage of the little stir which the guests made in finding their places, to lean across the child's shoulders, and to whisper to her son—

"Your uncle talked of having some serious conversation with you, Cuthbert, darling; but I'm afraid he's going to do something horrid. I don't know that he means to speak to you privately. Be prepared!"

Cuthbert, much surprised, replied, in the same low tone—

"How! not privately?"

"Just this instant," continued Mrs. Harding, "I partially overheard him talking to your father respecting you, as we were all coming from the verandah, and I caught something about 'the wholesome shock of an

exposure.' I know, I feel, he was speaking of you, dear."

There was no time to say more; everybody was seated, and silence prevailed for a moment. It was soon broken in general conversation, the doctor leading off on the subject of "table rapping." Cuthbert wanted to think, but Winny would not let him.

"How did you know about the sash, Cuth?" she demanded.

"Why, I saw you dart through the drawing-room with one of your stockings about your heels, and I saw you come back with the same stocking all right and trim again, to announce 's—u—upper, supper.' Nevertheless, I had, meantime, observed your lost garter upon the floor, where I told you afterwards to look for it. I had no idea how you had managed your slattern stocking till your mamma asked you what had become of your sash. Then, indeed, I easily guessed."

"Cuth, you are a witch!"

"A witch is a lady, Winny. You are more like a witch."

"Well, a witcher, then."

"Wizard, you rogue, wizard! Talk English, or I won't answer you. Emily, some wine: have you seen any of this table-rapping?"

"One cannot go into society without witnessing whatever frenzy has come last to the top—and '*cela fait fureur*' just now."

"You say——"

"I beg pardon; I forgot. I am so accustomed to talk French, or German, or Italian. But at Eton——"

Cuthbert, at that instant, thought less gratefully than he had formerly of his uncle's kindness in sending him to Eton and arranging his future for him, before he himself could have any voice in its settlement.

"The friend who sings," said he, "and

who paints so well, he knows those languages?"

She paused to look at Cuthbert, but, disdaining all affectation, said—

"Yes, he knows those languages, and knows the countries where they are spoken."

"And," persisted young Harding, "after travelling a good deal, and observing a good deal, while still a mere boy, he has now come home—has he not?—to settle in this county?"

"I believe so. I think his father—who, along with Sir Walter Mandeville, you know, represents the shire in Parliament—has said something about resigning his seat, and putting forward his second son, who is only just coming of age, as a candidate in his place."

"His second son!" exclaimed Cuthbert. "Is not Mr. Algernon, then, his eldest, his heir?"

"Oh, certainly not!"

Here Cuthbert shuddered violently, became deadly pale, and looked quickly back over his chair.

"Emily," said he, in a whisper, "you —you heard nothing, did you?"

"No!" said she, more astonished by his manner than by the question—"that is, I heard the voices at table, together with the busy sound of knife and fork—what do you mean?"

"Oh, nothing—nothing," he replied, in visible confusion. He hastily added—

"Have you met the elder brother? What sort of person is he?"

"The exact contrary of Mr. Algernon," she replied.

"From all I can gather," said Cuthbert, "that is not flattering—I mean, no favourable description of him."

"Of course, very *un*favourable," she said, with involuntary emphasis.

Doctor Marlowe, who (surpassing Zo-

roaster) had smashed, by this time, not one, but a great many, tables—all, in fact, on which any "rappings" had been practised—overheard Miss Whitsund's last remark, and exclaimed—

"You are speaking, I presume, of Mr. Childering's eldest son, George. The greatest scapegrace in the kingdom! The estate is strictly entailed on him, and he has already run pretty nearly through his own future life interest in it, by means of the most costly kind of post obits. If his father do not die immediately, Mr. George will be a ruined man by the time he comes into the property. If I were his father, I would never suffer him under my roof. In these days of clear-seeing *through* the mahogany, and strychnine *on* it, and of rapping tables for imps, there is no telling what he might not be capable of attempting."

"Oh, pray do not speak so fearfully, so horribly, guardian," said Miss Whitsund.

"Mr. George may be wild, wicked, and yet not an assassin—not a parricide."

"Very good," returned the doctor; "but I happen to know of an incident in this unhappy young man's career, of which incident you, Emily, are ignorant. During the sensation created by the trial and execution of Septimus Hodge, the poisoner—his former dwelling at Ditchend became, as you are aware, the object, the terminus, the bourne, of a largely frequented and scandalous pilgrimage, while the very ground on which he had trodden was venerated and treated as precious. Hundreds of thousands repaired to the shrine of this singular saint —and the very pebbles which paved the little garden walk leading up to his door were worth a shilling and (as they grew scarce) half-a-crown a piece! It is a positive fact, that not one of those pebbles which had been pressed by the sole of the caitiff murderer's foot, remains now in that

walk; all—all have been, one by one, bought up as relics by the devotion, the zeal, of the countless relays of ever succeeding pilgrims. We sneer at the Roman Catholics for making pilgrimages to the tombs or homes of martyrs and saints—for seeking and treasuring the relics of such persons as have died glorious deaths, after living blameless lives; the relics, in short, of those who have become famous by sheer goodness; and here is a wretch who, by sheer badness, sheer devilry, has, in about the same measure and degree, distinguished himself from the ordinary bulk and herd of men, and you cannot count the crowds of devotees to be found in civilized, enlightened England, who flock to the spots where he has left any print or trace of himself, in quest of some memorial by which they may, respectively, more vividly realize the individual, and retain within reach a means of, at will, recalling, familiarizing, domesti-

cating, eternizing, his memory and example among their very homes. Mesmerism! magnetism! clear-seeing! mystical affinities; evoked influences! wonders of concentrated meditation on an exciting theme! What are all these lame and clumsy processes compared to those which I have just mentioned? Mere puerilities—a feeble substitute. Here, here—on Septimus Hodge's hearth—you will find the true spiritual food for you, mysterious, your prodigy-working reveries, and clear-seeings. That's the true magic! Horrible—I say horrible! And the perverted and self-righteous age in which such things can occur calls itself the most enlightened of all!"

Here the doctor paused for breath, and looked round him with a glance of indignation, as if the company present had been the culprits to whom the invectives of his powerful and acrid eloquence were applicable. The reader may, perhaps, imagine, in con-

sequence of circumstances already related, that young Harding was all this time lying nervously under the expectation of the impending stroke with which he had been threatened; and, for this reason, that he would be now incapable of supporting his share in a mixed and general conversation; in fine, it might be supposed that, whoever might be likely to answer the doctor, and to fling back the volatile ball of discussion, it would not be Cuthbert.

"That is very good, uncle," observed he, "as you just now said to Miss Whitsund, but what bearing has it upon the particular character of Mr. George Childering?"

"You have expressed my very thought," said Miss Whitsund in a low tone to Cuthbert.

Young Harding smiled with an expression of surprise and pleasure.

"A fair question, nephew," returned the clergyman. "Well, in this huge moral

mania, the worst maniac of all was no other than that young gentleman. He not only joined in those infatuated and outrageous pilgrimages, the dishonour of our social state, the shame and infamy of our age—he not only purchased the sacred pebbles of the gravelled walk, like the rest of that rabble of demented miscreants—but he, alone of all, devised a new and peculiar method of testifying the general interest in the miscreant, the fiendish criminal, who had just fittingly finished so delightful a career upon the gallows. He alone thought of inquiring where the hypocritical murderer habitually sat in church (for this poisoner by profession was regular in his attendance at church); and he actually placed himself in the pew, and there he remained, wrapt in ecstatic musings for upwards of an hour. By such touches, believe me, character is glaringly revealed. The Greek, in pondering at the grave of Leonidas, was exalted

and transported with lofty thoughts; the Christian, as he bends over the hallowed spots of Palestine, is inebriated with a divine enthusiasm; and Mr. George Childering, as he meditated in the pew of Septimus Hodge, derived, I have no doubt, from the genius and influences of the place, inspirations worthy of the dock, and sentiments that may yet befit him to emulate his chosen prototype's career. We are all friends here. I speak, as it were, in my family."

Geoffrey, with very graceful thought—being the only stranger present—bowed, to acknowledge the flattering speech.

But in one sense, at least, the doctor's remark was not true; he had spoken not as if in his family, but as if in the pulpit, his voice making the very walls vibrate with its thunder. And, indeed, the style of all that diatribe which has been reported, concerning the pilgrimages to the poisoner's home, much resembled that of

his more ardent homilies and furibund discourses.

Dr. Marlowe Harding was a most remarkable man. His abilities were of the highest order, and of singular amplitude in the range which they embraced; they had breadth as well as height. But it was especially by his rough, vigorous, vehement, and nerve-shaking eloquence that he was distinguished. He was, beyond all comparison, the first preacher in the "Establishment." In short, only for his unusual—but I was going to say that he was "too gifted for a bishop." It is possible to cite exceptions to that rule of patronage which, for years, marked the policy of Dr. Marlowe Harding's friends; but it was, nevertheless, only by a daring menace he had got the living in which he now thundered. He uttered that menace on two occasions: on the first he was laughed at; on the second, he was installed in the rectory of *Panes cum Piscibus*. The anec-

dote, as characteristic of more persons than one, and, indeed, of two whole classes of persons, is worth relating:

"I'm beginning to feel very like a Dissenter," quoth Dr. Marlowe Harding to his old college chum, Lord A——, then high in the Cabinet.

"Well, feel like one, my dear fellow," returned that earl (bearer of one of the most ancient Saxon titles)—"feel like one, if you think it nice, or that it will do you any good."

"May be, it will do others harm, my lord," answered the indignant doctor; and he forthwith hired a large public building, which he so crowded, by the attractions of his unhackneyed, novel, genuine, and startling style, that the galleries broke down during his "third appearance," and some of the close packed, overwhelming audience actually lost their lives—several of the ladies had previously lost something

not quite so painful to resign—their hearts. From among these ladies, after attending the coroner's inquest, the successful preacher selected one, who had a small property, the sister of the late Colonel Whitsund, married her, and withdrew (professedly only for a time) from the temporary pulpit, which he had suddenly made so famous.

Just as he was emerging back into view, and dawning out of the honeymoon, he again met his friend, Lord A——. (We do not like giving the real name of that politician, who is dead. Suffice it to say, that it began with A—a very legitimate beginning.)

"I'm beginning," observed Dr. Marlowe Harding, "to feel once more very like a Dissenter."

"Then we are in for another coroner's inquest, though not for another wedding!"

"Tush, my dear fellow," continued the

earl; "all that sort of thing—vagaries, you know, and the rest—is very well for lads, fresh from reading; but in wise men, like you and me, it disturbs the digestion, eh?"

"Ah! my lord," says the doctor, eyeing the earl, who was a man of extraordinary portliness, "that depends on what one eats—and, I may say, on what one has to eat. Religion, my lord, is a great load to fat people."

"Really, eh? Well, I never heard that before. It is a new point of view to me. *I* never felt the weight of it."

"Only lift it up, my lord, and try," said the sarcastic divine.

"What! eh! caustic as ever?" cried the earl. "By-the-by, there's a living in my gift, just fallen vacant, *Panes cum Piscibus;* it would suit you to a nicety; twelve hundred a year, including everything. What do you think?"

"I agree with your lordship."

And thus, to parody a famous line of Alexander Pope's, Dr. Marlowe Harding, having *foamed* a free preacher, *subsided* a rich rector.

But, to account for the extraordinary scene which has now to be related, and which took place at the supper table of Lea Meadows, I must beg the reader's intelligent and kind attention to another of the doctor's talents, a talent less creditable than eloquence in his profession. He was what may be termed a "social diplomatist," of the most original genius. He was never known to fail in having any project adopted which he undertook to support, within the sphere of his family, or of his intimate friends. He was certain to carry anything which he recommended.

Such success—success so continued and uniform—is never the result of accident. It was indeed the fruit of profound thought

on the part of Doctor Marlowe Harding. He had discovered a secret upon which he acted—a moral lever, which many use, indeed, in an unconscious and clumsy manner, but which, probably, not another person living knew how to employ, or had so often purposely and systematically employed, to heave out of the way impediments which obstructed his plans of interest or ambition.

But he had never yet had occasion to try the efficacy of his hitherto infallible engine, or manœuvre against the proverbially obstinate tenacity of love; he was now about to make that supreme experiment. Guardians and uncles have immemorially been plagued with the difficulty of controlling the perverse attachments of wards and nephews; but guardians and uncles had not known the secret, the art, the expedient, on which Dr. Harding relied for victory. Would this secret avail to

solve a problem hitherto generally found insoluble and wholly desperate?

Before stating what was this secret of the doctor's art in domestic diplomacy, it will be well to mention at once another secret which he had discovered. It was that of Cuthbert's engagement with Miss Whitsund. The discovery was not a day old. From Eton, Cuthbert had corresponded with the lovely orphan, uneasily conjecturing, through her later replies, the new sphere in which she had begun to move, the gay circles into which she had been introduced. The engagement was not to be disclosed to her guardian till Cuthbert returned, and disclosed it himself. It is of no importance to the events which I am recording to explain the means by which Cuthbert had contrived to conceal the correspondence. Enough to say that his last letter had been intercepted by Dr. Harding, and had revealed everything.

"Mrs. Harding," said the doctor to his wife, holding this letter in his hand, "have you noticed the pointed attentions of Mr. Childering's second son, Algernon?"

It was on the morning of the very day of Cuthbert's return home, that the doctor put this question to his wife.

"I was going to ask you the same thing," said she.

"Well," pursued the doctor, "I am certain that our dear Emily is greatly struck by that young gentleman."

"It is not wonderful," said the wife.

"By no means," continued the doctor. "Now, in such houses as that of the Childerings', there is generally an ample provision for the younger children."

"I don't know," said the wife. "I think Mr. Childering married for love; and, you are aware, his own property is strictly entailed."

"Well, well," returned the doctor; "at

all events Algernon is a youth who is sure to make a brilliant figure in life. He is even about to enter Parliament, young as he is. He has, I am convinced, crept into Emily's affections. He is, himself, passionately enamoured. And, now look you, Mrs. Harding—*I am not a bishop!*"

Startled by this most unexpected conclusion, Mrs. Harding meekly answered—

"I know that, my dear."

"Well," resumed the doctor, "so far we are agreed. I am *not* a bishop! But Emily is tenderly attached to you; you have great influence over her. You will still, in your soft, unostentatious way, exercise that influence and retain that affection when she is Mrs. Algernon Childering."

"When she is, you say!"

"Yes," pursued he; "don't interrupt me. I have had a long conversation with Algernon, as I may well call him behind his back, since I have come to call him so to his face.

I have drawn him into a confidential avowal of his love for Emily. He, like an honourable youth, asked my permission to offer her his hand; although, mind you, I am not blind—I know very well that the rogue had been making love to the lady *before* this dutiful appeal to her guardian. The proof is, that he cannot think *me* more deserving of respect than his own father, and yet, when I inquired whether he had Mr. Childering's sanction, he replied that he would immediately solicit it; so that he had been committing himself first, and intended to ask leave afterwards!"

"Dear boy," said Mrs. Harding; "he pursued the usual course."

"Well," resumed the doctor, "this morning I received a note from him, communicating his father's consent; and saying that, so soon as he, Algernon, heard from me in return, he would make a proposal in writing to Emily herself; for, observe, although he

has been very attentive to our ward, and has exerted all his very rare accomplishments and gifts to win her heart, he never, it seems, has actually made her an explicit offer. His incomprehensible tact, his intuitive penetration, had revealed to him more than I knew myself, and he felt that a direct positive proposal would have terminated the addresses which it was his aim to continue and prolong, until he had made an impregnable lodgment in her heart."

"A proposal would have terminated them!" cried Mrs. Harding. "I don't understand."

"Ah! nor should *I* have understood; but this is really a wonderful lad! He had some indistinct presentiment that he would have been refused; and yet he *knew* that Emily loved him! Would you believe it? Our ward is engaged, madam! engaged, if you please!"

"Engaged! engaged!" exclaimed the lady.

"Ah! engaged, I tell you. That nephew of mine, for whom I had formed such great designs, and incurred such heavy expenses—Cuthbert, I say—obtained the plighted word from her before he went back, the last time, to Eton."

"Why, the poor girl could not," cried Mrs. Marlowe Harding, "have known her own mind!"

"No," said the doctor; "she mistook the affection of an intimate infancy, and the interest growing out of the common games of childhood, for love; and of *this*, Master Cuthbert took unfair advantage. But such a match would suit neither my plans for Cuthbert nor my plans for Emily. It would ruin both of the young pair, and each may aspire to play a part many degrees——" he interrupted himself, said "hum!" and

twirled his eyeglass. "But I am now away," continued he, "to Lea Meadows, and I will smash this precious project with a crushing blow; I'll hit it down to the earth; I'll strike it on the forehead; I'll make this forward nephew ashamed of himself—I will!"

And the energetic clergyman, twirling the eyeglass more rapidly than before with his left hand, and striking the air with his right hand clenched, strode up and down the apartment.

"You see, my dear, when Emily is Mrs. Algernon Childering, and when that phosphorescent young husband—that piece of light and fire—is in Parliament, *you*, as I have said, will influence Emily (I'll show you how to proceed); *she* will influence Algernon; I shall gain the Mandeville interest through him; and *I shall be a bishop!* Do you see?"

"I see," she replied.

Having now mentioned all the previous circumstances, a knowledge of which is indispensable in order to understand what ensued, it is time to return to the supper table at Lea Meadows.

END OF VOL. I.

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